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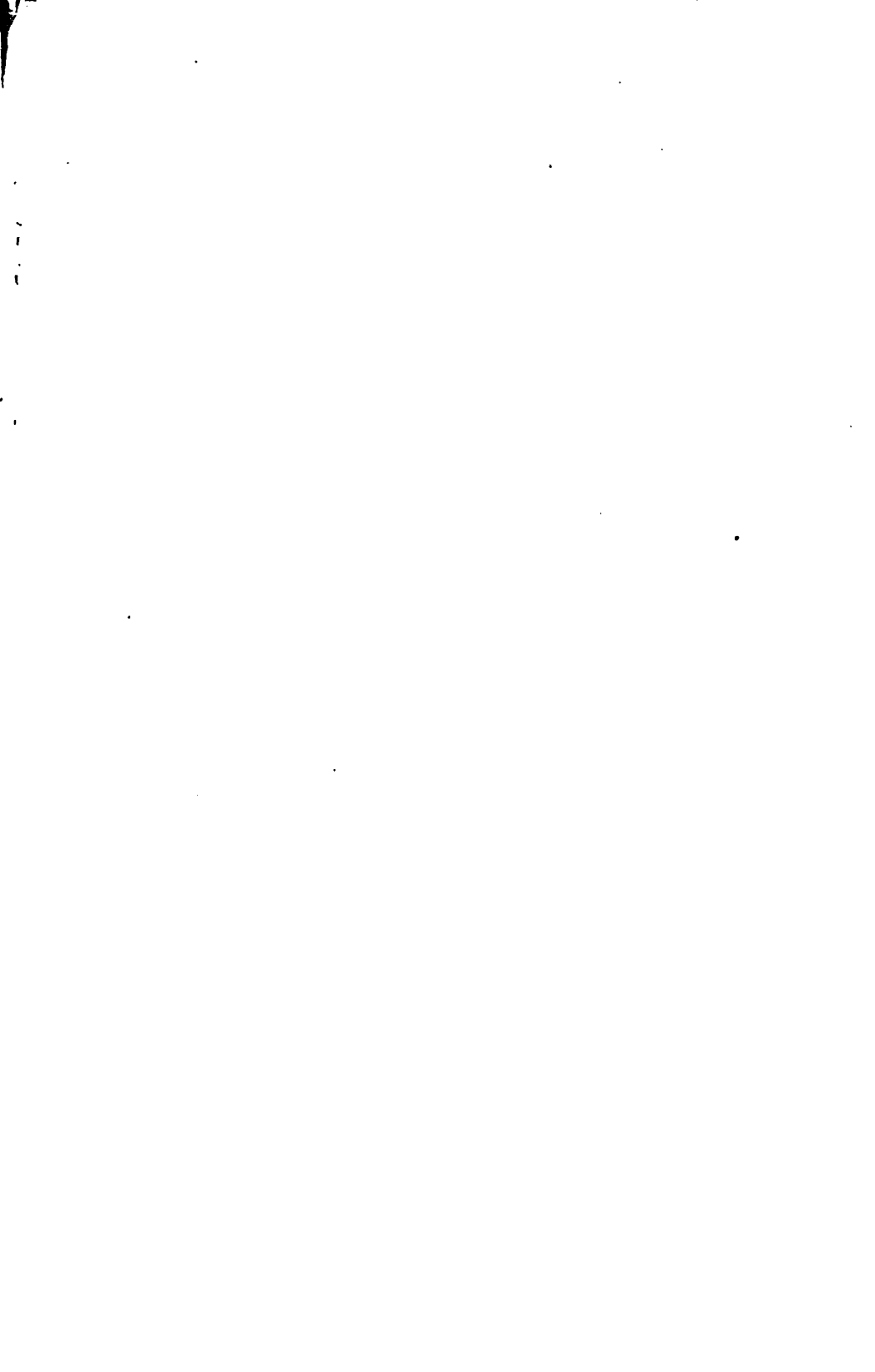
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*The Most Honorable
Lord Francis L Egerton
with the Author's very best respects*

DRAMAS FOR THE STAGE.

BY

GEORGE STEPHENS,

AUTHOR OF "THE MANUSCRIPTS OF ERDELTY," AND OF THE TRAGEDIES "THE VAM-
PIRE," "MONTEZUMA," "GEBTRUDE AND BRATRICE," "MARTINUZZI," ETC. ETC.

~~~~~  
Qui mare transcurrit, tandem sibi multa reportet ;  
Qui causas mercede colit, resplendet in auro ;  
Pauperiei lator picto jacet impius ostro ;  
Quique vias ferro intratas, cito præmia captat,  
Composito ; dat enim reliquis pretium atque vigorem.  
Nominis æterni famam toto orbe sonantem  
Promeret altam,—verum etiam ille ad præmia peccat !

Me miserum ! Sordet nunc sola TRAGÆDIA pannis  
Exuta, Aonidum quamvis pulcherrima ipsa !  
Sollicitat frustra cives non carmina amantes ;  
Atque inopi lingua neglectas invocat artes.

G. S.

~~~~~  
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ERRATA IN SECOND VOLUME.

- 79, — 5, *for* glistering *read* glistening
— 120, — 3, dele comma after Lilin.
— 193, — 1, *for* Here *read* Hear.
— 282, — 15, *for* sire *read* grandsire.
— 310, — last line, *for* dewspread *read* dew spread.
— 354, — 16, dele dash (—) after “gloom.”
— 395, — 4, *for* Mephistopholean *read* Mephistophelean.

SELF-GLORIFICATION.

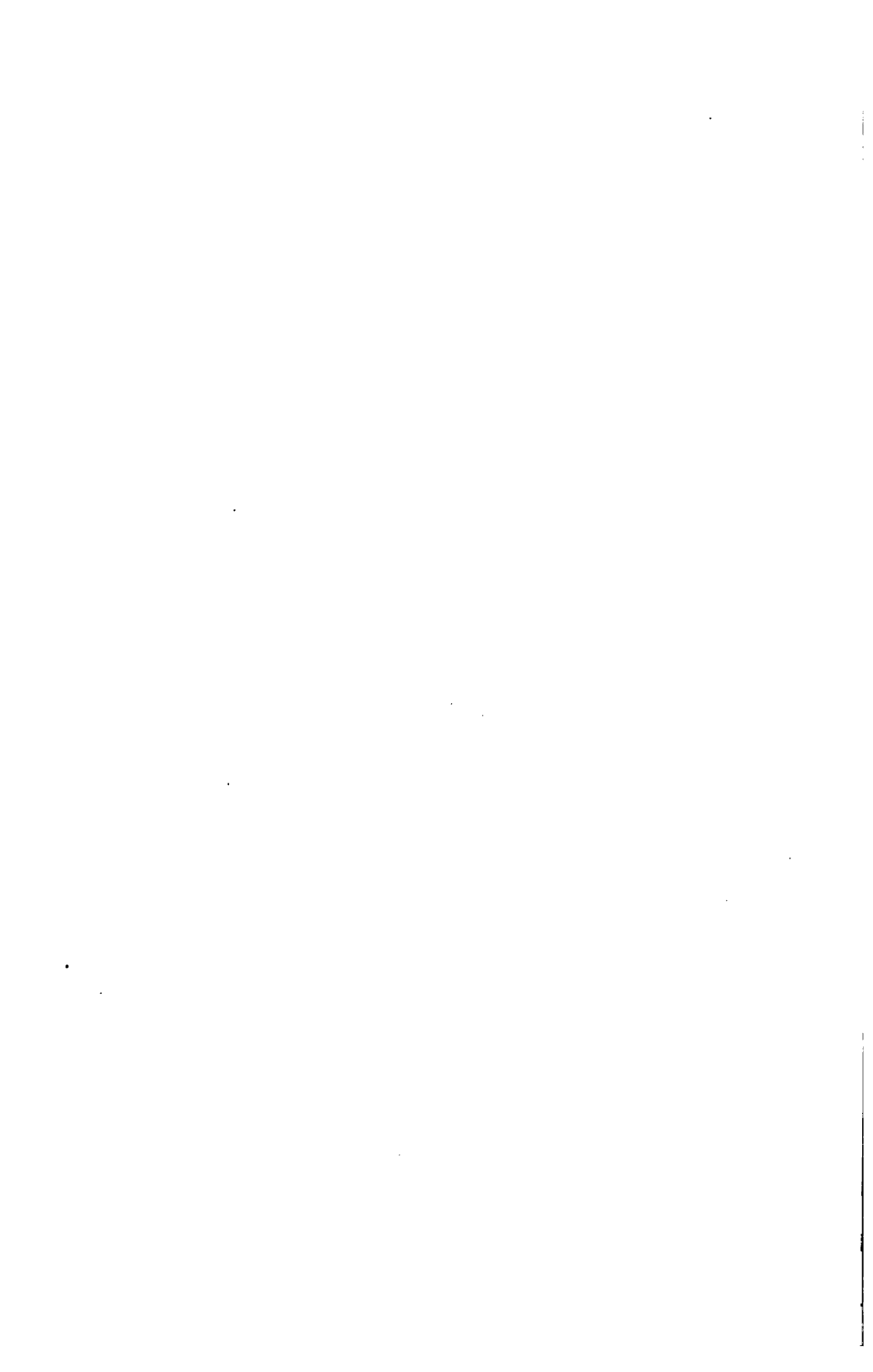
A CHINESE PLAY FOR THE TIMES.

In Five Acts.

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

TO

THE AUTHOR OF “TIME WORKS WONDERS.”



PREFACE TO "SELF-GLORIFICATION."

"The desire for *male* children is esteemed a *virtue*, and is incorporated in many of their daily salutations.

"There is *the widest difference* in their estimation *between male and female offspring*; the former are as eagerly desired as the latter are deprecated. The power over sons is absolute for life, and they are considered as a sure support, as well as a probable source of wealth or dignities; but the grand object is the perpetuation of the race to continue annually the *sacrifices at the family tombs*."

"*Without sons a man lives without honour or satisfaction, and dies unhappy.*"

"The extreme desire of *male* offspring leads parents to suborn the midwives to purchase a boy-babe of some poor person, and substitute it for a girl just born."

Catalogue of the Chinese Collection.

"Be strenuous in *filial piety*. It is a *doctrine from Heaven, the consummation of earthly justice*, the grand principle of action among mankind. The man who knows not *piety to parents* cannot have considered the affectionate hearts of parents towards their children."

"All who are of the same name, should bear in remembrance their common ancestry and parentage."

Discourse of the Emperor Youn-tching.

"Fathers have virtually the power of life and death over their children."

"Obedience to parents is placed at the head of all moral excellence."

Catalogue.

"After the interment, the tablet of the deceased is brought back in procession, and placed in the Hall of Audience with incense before it."

"The tombs of the rich are sometimes very large, and contain a considerable quantity of masonry, with figures in stone."

"About the spring, the whole population is seen trooping out in parties to the hills to repair and sweep their respective tombs, and make offerings; leaving behind them on their return long streamers of red and white paper to mark the fulfilment of their rites. Whole ranges of hills, sprinkled with tombs, long streamers of red and white paper may be seen covered with these testimonials of attention to the departed, fluttering in the wind and sunshine."

Catalogue.

"There are three great acts of disregard to parents, and to die without progeny is the chief."

National Maxim.

“The three blessings; happiness, long life, and *male* children.”

Catalogue.

“The strict observance of filial duty throughout the empire makes the son the most valuable property of the father.”

M. Grosier.

“The basis of all the civil laws of the Chinese is filial piety.”

“In certain cases THE HUSBAND CAN SELL HIS WIFE.”

NATIONAL *common law.*

“*Filial piety* is among the Chinese the first of virtues, the lack of it the worst of crimes. It is the grand basis on which all the religious, moral, and civil institutions of the empire are founded.”

“The greatest misfortune in life is the want of a son to honour and console his aged parents, and visit annually their tombs when dead.”

The “PELIEN KIAO” league alluded to in this drama, and on the existence of which the plot mainly rests, is a species of rebellious Freemasonry, at present flourishing, and which has long flourished, throughout the Celestial Empire.

Characters.

LAOTSEN *An honourable and wealthy Merchant.*
KAUTSU *Supposed son of SIEFONG.*
CHU *Vain glorious, and the son of FANSU.*
SIEFONG *A hardened desperate Gamester.*
YOUEN *Husband of FANSU.*
HONAN.

SERGEANT OF THE GUARD, OFFICERS, ATTENDANTS, &c.

FANSU *Daughter of LAOTSEN and mother of CHU.*
LILIN *Wife of KAUTSU.*
SIAO *Confidant and Attendant on FANSU.*

LADIES, ATTENDANTS, &c.



SCENE *Nankin and its environs.*

SELF-GLORIFICATION.



ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Saloon in the country Villa of LAOTSEN, in the neighbourhood of Nankin: rich lanterns depending from the ceiling.

Enter SIEFONG and HONAN.

HONAN.

Laotsen will attend you presently.

SIEFONG.

You are his man of business and trust,
If I remember rightly?

HONAN.

At your service.

SIEFONG.

You own the wealthiest lord, except, perhaps,
Hysyehu, our viceroy, resident at Nankin.

HONAN.

Laotsen is so reputed.

SIEFONG.

He retains

In trammels of a bond what I'd redeem,

HONAN.

Which, may be, is your present business.

SIEFONG.

No. I am come to engage my last possessions,
And forfeit all my *title*,

Hard !

I, Siefong,

Your employer's junior by some years, was taught
At the same school. We began life together.
My father early left me gold heaped up,
To I know not what amount. Broad lands I had,
Which the twins, usury and ill-luck, have bound
Fast in fair skins of parchment ; while Laotsen,
Owing nought to fortune but his skin, is grown
A mine of treasure !

Oh ! our angels mock us,
Thus in life's downward slope to change conditions.

HONAN.

Our acts our angels are ! Howe'er he thrives,
Higher in the popular voice Laotsen's held
For unmatched skill as merchant ; industry
For thirty years unflagging, and unquestioned
Moral integrity.

SIEFONG.

All well enough ;

But solves not this disparity betwixt
Us twain ; why wants grow heavy upon me,

While his once abject fortunes are at flood?
By Tien! but for my palace captaincy,
I should be brought to nothing.

Where's this great one?

HONAN.

Pacing his chamber in such dread suspense,
'Twixt hope and fear, that the most wretched slave,
Who cringes to his shadow, would not change
With our high-honoured merchant.

SIEFONG.

Enlighten me. What cause can put Laotsen
To such anxiety?

HONAN.

Like all who live,
At least in high prosperity, his worship
Desires;—but far more ardently than most men,—
To be the father of a son; for Fansu,
Whom Youen took to wife, his only daughter,
He never much affected, and, moreover,
A female heir ill fills the craving void
The wealthy parent owns.

You are aware,
Some two years since, Laotsen, with such object,
Or mainly so, allied himself to Han,
His second spouse, who, as we are advised,
By a courier from Nankin, suddenly,
By nature's hour of travail is o'erta'en.
In the pangs
Of this most trying crisis stands Laotsen,
Waiting the next express.

Behold his honour!

Enter LAOTSEN.

LAOTSEN (*speaking as he enters*).

Order another post. Let Pening mount
My fleetest nag to hasten their dispatch.
He must be near at hand. Away !
(*To HONAN.*) How long
Since we first learned these tidings ?

HONAN.

Not an hour,
My lord ; but, in that period, you have sent
A dozen several messengers, to bring you
The speediest intelligence.

LAOTSEN.

Too slow !

My heart beats faster time.

(*Taking SIEFONG's hand.*) Excuse me, Siefong . . .
You are well ? . . that's right, my friend.

(*Turns to HONAN.*) Now could I drink
The air 'twixt this and Nankin ! Dost not reckon
We shall hear soon ? The account was not so bad.
Prematurely taken ill . . . that's not uncommon,
Is it ? There's not a fibre in this frame
But is an asper.

Near to be delivered !

I am secure,—my hopes confirmed for ever—
Or else ! . . .

(*Apart.*) Ha ! *Prematurely !* There it is
That shakes me.

SIEFONG.

Good Laotsen !

LAOTSEN (*apart.*)

In my soul,
Methinks, there should be some intuitive power

To inform me of the event.

All things considered,
I have small cause for fear ; yet this dull sense
Is ominous, and, like a tolling bell,
Harbingers woe at hand.

(*To HONAN.*) Look out, I pray,
For these slugs on the road ; and bid the warder
At the first prospect sound his gong.

About it !

[*Exit HONAN.*

You have ta'en me, Siefong, at the very point
Of destiny. What patient zeal and thrift
Have laboured for, the harvest of my cares
And pilgrimage for half a century ;
Security sits wavering thereon,
Like the light down upon the thistle's beard,
And the next breeze . . . (*His voice dies away.*)

SIEFONG.

I've learned your dread suspense.

LAOTSEN.

You then will wonder not I am troubled, though
As yet unconscious of the latent cause
Of the terrible effects you witness in me.
How I have thriven you know ; but the long grief
To think, I owned no son who should inherit
The wealth, which toil and sweat of many years
Have sweetly earned, you cannot judge of, Siefong.

SIEFONG.

Troth, there you err ; I've felt the same, and purpose
To have, by purchase, a boy babe.

LAOTSEN.

That's not

Like nature's offspring.

But beyond this yearning

There weighs a prophecy upon me.

Once,—

'T is long ago . . . at Canton, I was wont
To commune with the Bonzes, who foretold me,
That all my undertakings would succeed,
Till, at the height of worldly reputation,
I should encounter an untimely doom,
Through dread unheard-of agency, unless
The danger were averted by a son,
Himself in imminent hazard of death's stroke
In the hour I first embraced him.

On the hair

Whereby *his* fate would hang, *my* clue of life
Would be found twisted also.

(*Mournfully.*) This birth prologues
The omen coming on the Bonze predicted.

SIEFONG.

I do not understand.

LAOTSEN.

Have I not learned

My wife was prematurely ta'en in childbirth?
Fate comes before its time. Alas! the issue
Of such a travail's apt as soon as born
To perish. I may boast this hour a son
Living. The next may own no heir to avert
The evil doom foreshown.

SIEFONG.

I'd take no heed

Of any such dark sayings. What will be
Will be.

Egad! my way's to live at random.

LAOTSEN.

You are wrong.

There is a special cause for all
Occurents 'neath the moon, and there be Bonzes,

Who, by long fasting and most diligent search,
Can pierce the truth of things, not yet evolved,
But treasured in their seeds.

For instance, actions
Light, words e'en lighter may . . .

(The tocsin rung.)

(LAOTSEN starts.) Gods!
But be your dealings gracious!

Hark! Be still!

A step?

I stand here fixed, the firmament
Trembling right o'er my head.

What, ho! Will no one
Fly to me, when a word would end this torture?

Enter FANSU, plainly dressed.

(She stops short.)

LAOTSEN *(gaspingly)*.

My daughter?

(After a pause.) Speak again! Tell me all's well,
Or make a sign to signify you've mercy.
Dumb still?

(Another pause.) Then I command you ope your lips.

FANSU.

Thy wife's no more.

LAOTSEN.

It cannot be, she lies
Stricken to death?

Swear thou art false in this,
And I will fall down at thy feet, and bless thee.

FANSU.

Let not the voice of Fansu loathe thine ears;
'T was Youen sent me.

LAOTSEN.

Peace for ever fled,
Leading my comforts in thy golden chain,
Linked to the life of Han !
(*Imploringly.*) There is some hope ?

FANSU.

None, Sir, alas !

LAOTSEN.

And childless too ! I know
That BOTH are dead : ah ! dead ? both wife and babe !

FANSU.

Not so, I think.

'T was surely said, an infant
Male had been born to thee ; howe'er the sparkle
Of life was weak.

LAOTSEN.

The prophecy !

No son

Will glut my longing soul, 'thwart which the truth
Flashes conviction. Thou hast quenched that sparkle,
Nor left me issue male ; and I stand out,
In my prosperity, indeed, a landmark,
But prostrate on the earth.

FANSU.

Console thee, sir.

LAOTSEN.

This affluence, what have I to do with it,
Now that my heart is empty of sweet peace ?
The tide of love and life hath no returning,
And all earth's hopes pass by me.

FANSU.

Still no warrant

Have you to think Han's offspring . . .

LAOTSEN (*interrupting*).

Fetch him hither,
That at his sight I may relieve my heart.

(*The bell sounds.*)

Enter YOUEN.

YOUEN.

Revered Laotsen! (*Stops short.*)

LAOTSEN (*aside*).

'Tis the hour the Bonze
Foretold,—the dreadful crisis marked by Fate!

(*Aloud.*)

Youen! The babe?

He is now the child of death,
Not mine.

YOUEN.

That I could say 't were not so, sir!

LAOTSEN.

Why then thou wouldst not!

But this news hath brought thee
Post haste from Nankin.

Oh, sir! I can pierce
Right through the bark of things!

That I am 'reaved
Of my one masculine hope, is well for Chu,
Thine, and my daughter's offspring.

YOUEN.

Sir, take comfort.

LAOTSEN.

I cannot. 'Tis with Han, and her fair child,
In heaven. They have engrossed it all.

YOUEN.

Thou hast

Fansu.

FANSU.

Nay, Youen ; of what account am I ?

LAOTSEN.

This love of mine that I have lost is more.
Myself, the vigour, picture of my youth,
Of daughters, worth a legion !

(*Apart.*) But all's one,

Since I am to follow shortly in my height
Of worldly reputation.

(*After a pause, suddenly.*) Ha ! I'll turn

That omen of the Bonzes to a lie ;

Massy as is the globe, by straightwise casting

The burden off of wealth, and so elude . . .

Though my son's fate be sealed . . . my doom contingent.

(*Crosses the stage absorbed in thought, then stops short.*)

Say, I roam the world to find an obscure grave ?

Let me think further.

[*Exit* LAOTSEN.]

SIEFONG.

Laotsen takes this loss to heart.

YOUEN.

No need.

Our Chu, my Fansu's boy, is twelve months old :

Methinks he might console his grandfather.

FANSU.

And he is *so* engaging ! He will pick

The brightest feathers, offer them his nurse,

To deck his frock withall ; and toss his head

As proudly, as he knew he were related
To rich Laotsen!

SIEFONG.

Scarce his mother's child.

FANSU.

All Nankin knows, and Youen, *my* mild nature.
My father brought me meekly up; but, somehow,
My Chu's quite consequential,—the quaint dear!

YOUEN.

By-the-by, Siefong, I have heard you wish
You owned a lad yourself. Now, I have a slave
Who, yesternight, gave birth to one.

Being poor,

She, for a trifle, I am told, intends
Offering the babe for sale.

Shall I forestall

The auction, in your favour? Faith! his mother
Will nurse the imp for you; who, if not thus
Disposed of, is already doomed to perish.

SIEFONG.

Why, I don't mind, for any trifling outlay;
Which, when the yearling colt grows to his work,
May prove a good investment.

FANSU.

(*Apart to YOUEN.*) Who's this slave?

YOUEN.

(*Apart.*)

Lotsa.

FANSU.

(*Apart.*) *Is 't true?*

YOUEN.

(*Apart.*) True? Prithee, who can cross it?

FANSU.

(*Apart.*)

What *do* you mean?

SIEFONG.

You will secure the infant

For me. His name?

YOUEN.

Kautsu.

SIEFONG.

I'll buy.

Excuse me:

I have business with Laotsen.

[*Exit SIEFONG, whistling.*]

FANSU.

Tell me, Youen,—

What *am* I to think?

Is it your infant slave

You'd sell to Siefong, or my new-born brother,

Whose life was now in question? Say!

I quake,

For fear Laotsen

YOUEN.

None can guess but you;

And the dull, gossip midwife, bribed to silence,

Who *is* the infant Kautsu. (*After a pause.*)

You dare not baulk an enterprise of kindness,

To benefit our boy.

FANSU.

But when my sire,

Beside their deathbed, shall demand the corpse,

What *canst* thou say?

YOUEN.

That Lotsu's still-born issue,

Who, substituted in your brother's place,

Lies by Han's side, is his cold progeny.
Him let Laotsen dandle for his own,
And see entombed in state.

FANSU.

The heavens forgive it!

Re-enter LAOTSEN and SIEFONG.

LAOTSEN.

(Speaking to SIEFONG as they enter.)

They're your last dollars. Vulture-like, thou'st eaten.
Right through the golden womb thy father left
At last thou'lt live in compass,—else turn thief.

SIEFONG *(shrugging his shoulders)*.

I warrant you, forsooth.

O'er all my heritage

You are landlord now.

(Turns away, humming a tune.)

LAOTSEN.

I've tidings for you, children,

When to their silent home I have consigned
Han and her fatal burthen, I shall quit
This city, to advise the government
Of certain state revenues, badly farmed.

(After a pause.)

Perchance I never may revisit Nankin.

FANSU.

Father, oh, talk not so!

LAOTSEN.

Before I leave,

I shall make over all my property
To Youen and thyself,—till my return.

FANSU.

Too generous of you !

YOUEN.

Noble sire in law !

LAOTSEN.

In trust for certain purposes . . .

FANSU.

In trust ?

YOUEN.

In trust, sir, did you say ?

LAOTSEN.

Surely, in trust ;

You 'll let the hospitality employed,
For years in favour of our poorer kindred,
Fall never to disuse, that none feel want
Who knock but at our gates, and let our roof
Still cover naked wretchedness.

To that,

Pledge ye.

FANSU.

Oh, none shall claim the charities
In vain, are due to all men, 'specially
When ties of nature strengthen their appeal.

LAOTSEN.

Next, I must bear your solemn word to sweeten
At each returning spring, our family tombs,
With holiest strewings ; moss, and herbs, and flowers,
The fairest and most rare ; and, at some cost,
Having new gilded and adorned the shrines,
Pay sacrificial incense to the souls
Of relatives deceased ; nor yet omitting

Me, your immediate progenitor,
To whom such offerings may be due debt.

FANSU.

Not only at the spring, but every quarter
We will observe these rites. Nor shall they lack
Gay garlands, shady groves, our tombs. Bright flowers,
The freshest shall grow up there.

And, besides,

A tablet in our hall of ancestors
Shall present golden figures, six inch deep,
To blazon to the world thy mighty deeds,
And our devotion.

There, I'll constant worship
In honour of thee, feeding eyes and lips
On thy dead shadow.

LAOTSEN.

Should I not appear
Ere Chu is of age, 't is like my living shade,
Invisible, may love to haunt those tombs.
Then my townhouse be thy son's residence.

FANSU.

Sir, not appear again! The thought on't rives me.
But never doubt, thy very least injunction
Shall be religiously observed.

LAOTSEN.

Well said!

Fail not your memory!

And, as all your life,
Never attire thy body gaudily;
But burnish your clear soul in glittering virtue.

FANSU.

You'll please to bless me, sir. (*She kneels.*)

LAOTSEN.

(In a solemn voice)

LAOTSEN'S DAUGHTER,

Arise ! I bless you !

We 'll set out for Nankin
To bury Han, with my abortive, frail
Petition to the gods, who have blasted me
In granting what I prayed for, since their gift

I am denied to clasp . . . *A son and heir !*
Follow in silence, for my soul is sad.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

(N.B. Twenty years are supposed to have elapsed since the first Act.)

SCENE I.

A mean apartment.

KAUTSU and LILIN.

KAUTSU.

My dearest Lilin, Wife,
You play the traitor to my rights, to suffer
Sorrow's chill finger press the blood from out
Thy ever-springing lip.

LILIN.

Wouldst have me smile,
My father locked in marble slumber, Kautsu ?

KAUTSU.

The lamp of heaven hath twice burnt out her light,
And twice revived, since on his starry voyage
Your father Sening, steered.

LILIN.

Alas ! Old Time
Ruffles the stagnant air of human woe
With no perceptible motion ; though his wings,

Still, hovering, pass, they do not pass away.
It seems we parted yesterday.

KAUTSU.

Two months.

My sire left ere his death, and he has been absent . .

LILIN (*interrupting*).

Siefong?—That he were ever!

KAUTSU.

Bitter wish!

LILIN.

You cannot wonder at it? Oh! to rob
Thee of hard earnings to piece out his sloth—
And when, by means best known to his dark soul,
He lights on treasure, at one cast to hazard,
Yea, and lose all, unmindful of my Kautsu,
Who, howe'er scant'ly stored with victual, must
Provide perforce his meal upon the morrow;
A course so vile belies the stamp of nature;
Or speaks such love as beasts want instinct for.

KAUTSU.

But for your loss!

LILIN.

The good old man! *my* father.

He had no source of gain to all a secret,

He had no mystery like Siefong.

KAUTSU (*aside*)

Humph!

(*Aloud.*) 'Tis good to think the best of those whose blood
Is locked within our veins; so I *my* father
Obey while living, you *yours* honour dead.
Only I doubt, all men are close sometimes.

LILIN.

Nay, but . . .

KAUTSU (*placing his hand on her mouth*).

Pray spare your emphasis.

Of late,

Thou hast been my only worship ; for 't is hard
To turn from eyes you wash so constantly
To the dirty, rolling, wooden orbs of Fo.
Retire my beautiful ! and leave me private.

LILIN.

My heart's contentment ! still I'll sit within
As memory brooding o'er love's grave.

Be brief;

The gods are quick of ear.

[*Exit* LILIN.]

KAUTSU.

It is enough

To make me swear to hear her, when her father
Left proof of his attachment to the league
Which overawes the city, and which brought
To sudden death our viceroy Hysyeh.

Now daily,
I look for instructions from the emperor ;
Those writings of my precious father-in-law
I forwarded, advised him . . .

(*A voice without.*)

Who's within ?

KAUTSU.

The master of the house.

Enter LAOTSEN.

LAOTSEN.

Your name is Kautsu ?

KAUTSU.

And yours ?

LAOTSEN.

Lo ! my credentials.

(Gives a paper.)

KAUTSU *(making a low obeisance)*.

From the court ?

First my fair Lilin, I will make you fast.

(Secures the inner door, and then reads.)

LAOTSEN *(apart)*.

A goodly frame ! whose open countenance
Bespeaks a kindly nature.

Now methinks

He stands beside me like my youth. Just so
I ravished instant sympathy. He looks
My counterpart, some fifty years gone by.

KAUTSU.

When will his mightiness, the governor,
Perfume the air of Nankin with his presence ?

LAOTSEN.

Before he makes his entrance he would learn,
Have you yet sifted out the purposes
Of those besotted traitors ?

KAUTSU.

Sir, they point,

Remotely, at an impious revolution.
But they have a dearer object, more defined ;—
The privilege of smoking opium,
To assert for Nankin.

LAOTSEN *(after a pause)*.

Hast cognizance what subtle means were used
To bring to untimely end great Hysyehu ?

KAUTSU.

None, save the actual murderer, can divine.
But should the coming governor interdict
The opium pipe, the self-same vindicator
Will take him from the face of heaven.

LAOTSEN (*eagerly*).

Who is he,

This vindicator?

KAUTSU.

I have not discovered.

He initiates each member of the league,
He only. But ere positive orders reached me
To feign to join their fell association,
The man had quitted Nankin; he to-day
Returns.

LAOTSEN.

You'll know him shortly, then?

KAUTSU.

This night!

LAOTSEN.

Then till to-morrow. Patience! . . .

Art instructed

What other names belong to this dire union?

KAUTSU.

The most of the free leaguers meet close wrapped;
But there is *one* admitted since myself,
Who noting I attended there unmasked,
As were the injunctions of the imperial court,
Scorned, as he said, disguisement.

LAOTSEN.

Who may he be?

KAUTSU.

The rich and mighty Chu, who, with his mother,
Resides in the most specious house in Nankin.

LAOTSEN.

Mean you the son of Youen ?

KAUTSU (*as if trying to recollect*).

Youen . . . Youen ?

Before my memory serves Chu's father died.

LAOTSEN.

And left Fansu his widow ?

KAUTSU.

Sir, it seems,

You know the family ?

LAOTSEN.

I did, years past.

Are they held in estimation ?

KAUTSU.

They are reputed

For *self appreciation* 'mongst the first
Of citizens ; but, as respects *self-knowledge*,
They lag behind most folks.

LAOTSEN.

What, they have managed

To pique the secret vanity of others,
By open demonstration of their own ?
But your remark applies not to Fansu ?
She's kindly tempered, meek, profuse of alms.

KAUTSU.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! Excellent ! Ha ! ha !

LAOTSEN.

What so amuses you ?

KAUTSU.

Your irony.

LAOTSEN.

Is she not ?

KAUTSU.

As a tiger cat, she is tempered ;
And meek, as peacock spreading round his tail,
And setting out his colours to advantage.
As to her charities,—I cannot speak,
More than to flowers in winter. There's a chill
Circle about her heart . . . her alms are frost-bound.

LAOTSEN.

Can you mean Fansu, daughter of Laotsen ?

KAUTSU.

I cannot say . . . I never heard of the man.

LAOTSEN (*aside*).

Oh ! pictured columns, piously wrought o'er
With golden figures, six inch deep, to show
The world my mighty deeds, and her devotion !
(*Aloud.*) But Chu is well esteemed ?

KAUTSU (*with a smile*).

He is well known.

One who, believe his boastings, doth possess
Such mastery in every pursuit,
That he is forsooth exempt, by right of talent,
From paying reverence, and those duteous forms,
Wherein our Chinese empire's most accomplished.
All precedents he scorns, being self-accounted

Prime of the company, and eke the world :—
A mania with him.

Thus his mind's afflatus
Is big, by turns, with every freak in nature,
Whereon he plumes himself, to o'ertop others,
And be thought somebody !

LAOTSEN (*aside*).

Would I could style
This youth instead my grandson !

KAUTSU (*looking through the window*).

Yon smart bombast,
See you just turned the corner ?

LAOTSEN.

With the strut ?

KAUTSU.

That's Chu himself !

He threatened me to call,—
I hoped he had forgotten,—to talk over
Our glory in this secret fellowship.

LAOTSEN.

His head's thrown off o' the hinge.

KAUTSU.

His brain is.

LAOTSEN.

Leave him

With me awhile.

KAUTSU (*with a bow*).

Your sage experience wills ;
I am bound to obey.

[*Exit* KAUTSU.]

LAOTSEN

Were that youth kin to me !

Enter CHU.

CHU.

My mind is high, but fortune is my foe!
What close proceedings! Ha! a fellow leaguer?

LAOTSEN.

How didst guess that?

CHU.

How? What dull-pated knave
You common sort are!

But I am to blame.
Wise Nature hath not wherewithal to lavish
Intuitive sense at random. Were all stars,
How could Chu overshadow the unlearned world?
The gods be thanked! I found my greatest wisdom
In condescension . . . 'tis my chiefest praise!

LAOTSEN (*in a low voice, mysteriously*).

You are right: I *am* member of the Opium League.

CHU.

You meant to tell me news; but my thoughts fly
A higher pitch than ordinary people's.
I'd have you know I boast a head for policy . . .
As all things else, transcend in 't. Did you ask
How I divined your faction? Whose this house?

LAOTSEN.

I am told, thou too art freeman of the band,
Secret, that threatens the government?

CHU.

Without

A breach of modesty, I can assure you,
That I the heart of this society
Wield at my single will,

I am number one.

LAOTSEN.

Not being initiate, I have yet to learn
Their objects, ere I swear.

CHU.

I am not sure
That I should stretch the truth, did I affirm
The Imperial line were jeoparded. It rests
For my decision ; but the main point is,
That opium should be brought to lawful use.
Oh ! had you heard the excellent oration
Touching this point which I . . .

LAOTSEN.

Sir, by the taste
You now afford, I apprehend 't was owing
To you, that Hysyehu . . .

(Stops short.)

CHU.

My genius
And thine are friends !—they have conversed.

You grace

The tuition of him that made you.

(Heroically.) THIS the hand

That struck the patriot blow !

LAOTSEN.

Now, Heaven forbid !

CHU.

I had inveighed five hours upon the theme . . .
That night we adjourned, that the exalted sense
Of all might cool to vote ; when, the next eve,
A most hot-livered enemy to smoking,
Save plant of China, suddenly upstarted.

Poppy! he exclaimed, it was a weed profane,
 To cast a mist over men's eyes and ears!
 A judgment on our empire, so it was,
 That our substantial commodities,—
 Paintings in rice, bells, lanthorns, porcelain,
 And our indigenous infusion . . . tea,
 Silks, stuffs, and such like, should be e'er exhaled
 Into the smoke of vanity. For his part . . .
 But as he was proceeding, I, myself,
 Angry to hear the generous gas abused,
 Uprose, as if I begged their best attention.
 I am surprised, or in a quandary . . .
 On honour, I remember not precisely
 Whether way my exordium!

LAOTSEN.

Oh! either

Will serve the turn.

CHU.

I am indeed surprised,
 Words being no more than wind, it should be left
 To me, by answering a fool, to seem
 Myself no less; or else by giving way,
 Betray the cause wherefore we are assembled,—
 Opium! that sovereign drug! without whose use,
 As of another element, the world
 Had ne'er imbibed the luxury of sensation . . .
 There's an apostrophe!

LAOTSEN.

Sir, as I ought,

I trust, I hear you.

CHU (*with a bow*).

You are a Mandarin!

Oh, sensual fume! which, entering at the mouth,

Walks through the brain, to drive out all ill vapours,
 Siding with nature, foe to emptiness ;
 Filling the vacant heads with gaseous airs,
 Sharpening the edge of love, and blunting care ;
 And yielding to the courage of a man
 A puissant passiveness !

Is't to be borne,
 The while our manufactures unsurpassed—
 Paintings in rice, bells, lanthorns, porcelain,
 Silk, stuffs, and so forth ; bohea, congou, souchong,
 Twankay, and hyson,—not to mention Howqua,—
 Fade, rot, grow mouldy, on the thin air wasted,
 As, for a vent of freedom, we should shut
 Our ports to this most necessary article,
 Resigned to vegetate on earth, not live ?
 How like you this ?

LAOTSEN.

Why, well.

CHU.

But well ?

Give ear !

What, I proceeded, then doth he deserve
 Who would ban bliss to Nankin ?

Therewithal,
 As with one voice, all present shouted—DEATH !

LAOTSEN.

Death, Chu ! To whom ?

CHU.

Unto our governor,
 To be sure.

That wild shout might have terrified,—
 Not the Sun's Brother ; he has no cause to fear,
 But all the kings and viceroys that o'er-rule
 Asia.

The tongueless cavern where we met

Echoed the cry ! The hollow heavens replied—
DEATH ! and the solemn conclave straight rejoined,
As to the doubt expressed in every eye,
But *who* shall cut him off ?

Then all sat still,
Save me, who, conscious of transcending glory,
My country's peril pressing on my heart's strings,
Slowly uprose to proffer this right arm.
Accept me, gods ! I cried . . The act be mine !

LAOTSEN.

And did you ?

CHU (*sublimely*).

Hysyehu is in his shroud !

LAOTSEN.

Is *that* your answer ?

CHU.

Not forthcoming yet,
The radical Kautsu ? Would he cloak himself
From further knowledge ? All the honour *his*
Forsooth to go unmasked ! He need not hope it !
Sir, at my mother's mansion I'll declare
My deeper objects, upon which I'll muse
Betwixt this and the hour. So—Fare-thee-well !

LAOTSEN.

I will not fail. Give me thy hand. Farewell !

CHU.

And give me thine, thou revered rebel !

LAOTSEN.

There !

(*They shake hands.*)

Farewell again, great Chu !

CHU.

Again to thee !

(They shake hands a second time.)

LAOTSEN.

Now go thy ways for a genius, and what not !

CHU.

Now go thy ways for a parasite !

(After a pause, with an air of self-complacency.)

STILL I'm Chu !

[Exit CHU.]

LAOTSEN.

Ho, Kautsu ! There !

Re-enter KAUTSU.

KAUTSU.

My Lord ! Chu gone ?

LAOTSEN.

For awhile

My high commission from the celestial court,
Must remain secret. Learn the miscreant's name
Who dares offend the gods, and brave his highness.

KAUTSU.

Therein to-night I am instructed ; which
I account no wrong divulging : I but practise
A subject's nearest virtue,—to obey
The Emperor's edict !

LAOTSEN.

Thou dost well to choose
The narrow path of duty. Mind, to-morrow,
I shall be punctual.

KAUTSU.

Then will I denounce
The active agent of these men, concealed,
Who judge and 'venge like gods.

LAOTSEN.

Not vengeance, Kautsu,
But innocence concealed the gods delight in!
Good day!

KAUTSU (*with low obeisance*).

Your excellency's slave!

*As LAOTSEN is making his exit, enter SIEFONG, hurriedly
pushing past LAOTSEN.*

LAOTSEN (*in a surprised voice of recognition*).

Ha! Siefong!

[*Exit LAOTSEN.*

SIEFONG.

The devil fetch him! What's his business here?

KAUTSU.

Father, how fare you? Have you been in health?
You look so . . . Since, all leave-taking dispensed with,
You vanished nearly three months since.

How fare you?

SIEFONG (*gruffly*).

Do I close my eyes? They're clear,

My skin, is't shrivelled?

These brawny sinews, are they shrunk? This hand
Methinks is steady enough. What mean you by
"Have you been in health?" the while you know I hate
Such lack-a-daisical fine holyday phrases.

KAUTSU.

Heard you of Lilin's loss? Her father, Sening,
Fell in a fit, and died within an hour.

SIEFONG.

There's one fool less in Nankin.

KAUTSU.

We were at sea.

SIEFONG.

And so, his person searched, you found details
Of smuggled opium, and intelligence
Thence must have got of the *Pelien Kiao*.

KAUTSU.

You are not member of that horrid league?

SIEFONG.

That horrid league? Hell and the devil! Boy,
Thou art, I find; and that thou went uncloaked
Showed braver spirit than thy going for years
Supperless, for sake of school craft.

'S blood! I knew not

It had been in thee, lad.

KAUTSU.

You are not a Leaguer?

SIEFONG.

I am what Nature meant, and have my toy
Like every one while they live here, who are wont,
From secret impulse of one sort or other,
Make it their god, and then like puppets follow
The fate, or true or false within . . . *Mine's dice*.
Idolatrous worship!

Was what influenced thee

More orthodox?

KAUTSU.

I am not a Leaguer till
The Vindicator call on me to swear.

SIEFONG (*in a commanding voice*).

He calls upon thee *now*!

Why dost thou tremble,
Draw back, and look so pale?

He who destroyed,
By poison, the late Viceroy Hysyeh,
Pledged to lay low our coming Governor,
Should he proclaim the opium fume illegal,
Proffers the oath of fellowship to Kautsu.

KAUTSU.

Unsay thy words, my father. Every crime
Hath its avenging angel . . . *Poisoner*?

SIEFONG.

I know a pungent tincture, which, but scented,
Finds quick access, by rare and subtle means,
Unto the life.

With it, I, unsuspected,
His court assembled round him, let in Death
To Hysyeh.

KAUTSU.

But ne'er again?

SIEFONG.

I forfeit
Wealth, if I compass not the right to all
In Nankin to wrap up their sense in smoke
Of the delicious poppy.

KAUTSU.

Desperate gain!
When, cast thy credit, thou must stake thyself
In the mad rage of gaming. Thou art lost!

SIEFONG.

Swear to be true and secret, I command thee,
To the Anti-Opium-Ordinance League, till death !

(A knocking heard at the chamber door.)

LILIN *(within)*.

Kautsu, dear Kautsu !

KAUTSU.

No oath now, I pray thee.

SIEFONG.

Hast cash about thee ?

(Aside.) I must be in the trim,

Going to court a widow.

(Aloud.) Reach thy store.

(KAUTSU produces a small bag, which he hands to SIEFONG.)

KAUTSU *(with deep earnestness)*.

'T is all our earnings ; take it ! Held it more,
You should be welcome ; only do not think
To root thyself in dead men's graves, and prosper.
Father, I 'll work, beg, borrow, all thou need'st—
Will be thy slave to trample on ; and . . pardon
All lack of happy years, and memories
Of tranquil childhood—only peace of conscience,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee,
I implore thee, do not violate.

SIEFONG.

Thy conscience !

Thou art not to apply the poison.

KAUTSU *(with earnest feeling)*.

I conjure thee,

By all that tempers life's worst bitterness,
Cease commune with this league.

There is something awful,
Not yet in being . . thou wot 'st not of.

SIEFONG.

Art mad ?

KAUTSU (*emphatically*).

Beware the event ! The deed to which you are bound,
Uncertain, and in darkness . . .

SIEFONG (*interrupting*).

Ha ! ha ! ha !

The deed to which I am bound at present is so.

KAUTSU.

And thou may'st stumble o'er a sudden grave,
Dug for thee e'en by him thou least suspectest.

SIEFONG.

What, spies ? Since no man how I work these deaths
Can know, why, none can blab.

I must be gone.

KAUTSU.

Doubt not the Government's mercy.

I'll plead for thee,

And at the worst . . .

SIEFONG.

What babblest thou, weak driveller ?

When from thy lips a thousand silver pieces

Drop as thou speakest.

(*With a sneer.*) When thou own'st so many,
Thou may'st buy off this deed.

KAUTSU.

That I possessed them,

To save thy soul from crime !

SIEFONG.

You are sworn to night !

[*Exit SIEFONG whistling.*]

KAUTSU (*alone*).

To-night ! the oath of fealty take to-night !
But on the morrow this society
Betray to outraged justice, and the slayer
Of Hysyehu denounce ?—that wretched being
My father !

Either way I am undone.
The envoy 'll seek me here . . . A parent's tie
Is sacred. Then what help ?

(*After a pause.*) I'll steal away,
And by some means our new viceroy of danger
Will warn, yet Siefong unimpeached.

LILIN (*without*).

Do, Kautsu,
Unlock the door. You love me not.

KAUTSU (*opening the door*).

How is 't,
My best of joys ?

Re-enter LILIN.

LILIN.

You shall not have a word.

KAUTSU.

Stint not yourself to such extreme.

Our cup
Of life, although with honey-dew o'erflowing,
Owns drops enough that spoil the taste . . . Alas !
'T is bitter-sweet !

Siefong is back.

LILIN (*breathlessly*).

Hast seen him ?
Spoken ?

KAUTSU (*dejectedly*).

'T is not my cue to mar the beauty
Of the rich world, and shadow forms the sun
Makes gay and golden (*moves away*).

LILIN (*aside*).

Something terrible !

(*Turning to KAUTSU.*)

And yet what harm the while I see thee, hear thee,
And thy warm breath pours life, and thy dear palm
Grasps mine, and *you* in health ? Clasp me again !

KAUTSU.

My star of beauty, listen ! Siefong hath
Ta'en from me my last dollar ; and I'm bound
To hide from strictest search that can be made,
Where I may cozen fate.

Thou wilt remain.

LILIN (*with feeling*).

Kautsu, we keep in leash. My wounded feet
Shall attend thine, untiring, through all paths
Of danger, of distraction, and of death.

KAUTSU.

Thy love o'er my torn bosom trickling runs
Like balm. So wholly mine, we think one thought !
(*After a pause.*)

A reverend tomb, hard by the ruins of Fo,
Where dust of centuries mingles with the ashes
Of most renown'd men, frowns on the city.
Beneath its huge bulk delved, a cavern yawns.
There pines eternal night.

It seems a haven
Framed for my purpose ; but no shelter proffers
To Lilin.

If thou art afraid, love, say so.

LILIN (*with emotion*).

What ! by thy side ?

It were a bliss past bliss,
The *dying* in thy service to approve
My love ; and can I fear to *live* with thee ?

That cave, although its lazy air struck chill
As loathsome steam of pestilence, were heaven
My husband, in thy arms. But, ah ! without thee,
A sun-proof barren tomb our dwelling here,
Were it a palace.

KAUTSU (*affectionately*).

Thou art my own peach-blossom !

(*They embrace.*)

LILIN.

I will but make some needful preparation,
And I am ready.

KAUTSU.

Thus, then, linked till death !

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Magnificent Apartment.

Enter FANSU, gaily attired, and SIAO.

FANSU.

To whom his business?

SIAO.

If it would please you,

Unto yourself.

FANSU (*affectedly*).

Since I laid Youen out,
And so acquired the right to suffer near me
The sex to breathe, I've shunned them, and kept clear
Of that impureness proper to man's nature . . .
I mean when clothed in cotton . . . being void
Of like low tastes myself as any altar;
Nay, at the thought, I sometimes wish the world
Were peopled without men!

SIAO (*aside*).

Alas! the while!

FANSU.

Why *is* this curl higher than all the rest ?
Who, say you, asked for us ?

SIAO.

Why, Siefong.

FANSU.

Bless us !

How old he must be ! Since we saw him last,
He hath sunk his means, and spent his stock of credit ;
Familiar with jails. The wasting fellow
Would trouble us with 's needs ! We have, I think,
Least health of any lady of God's making ;
And never *could* abide a wanting creature.
Our's is a tender sex . . . 'specially widows !

SIAO.

He's here.

FANSU.

Go, turn him back.

*Enter SIEFONG (richly habited).*SIEFONG (*approaching* FANSU).

My noble Fansu !

FANSU (*with a faint shriek.*)

Whate'er thou art, keep off, or . . oh ! my tooth-ache !

SIEFONG.

Oh ! my good friend ! you would say.

Zounds !—'t would poze

An antiquary to decide between us,
Now I am new created, which is which,
Save for the sex !

FANSU.

Hear the unmannered goblin !
Strip off the gilt, Siao, from my slippers ;
I've worn them, in good troth, almost two days :
Try them on : burn the gold : bestow thy absence.

[Exit SIAO.]

SIEFONG.

Did not Laotsen say

FANSU.

Laotsen ? fellow.

SIEFONG.

Laotsen, fellow ! No : Laotsen ;—father
To Fansu, and her wealth ; or else I dreamt it.

FANSU.

If you have come to dream, prithee, begone :
If beg, we cannot give you countenance.

SIEFONG.

'Tis not thy *countenance*, but *hand* I seek.

FANSU.

We look for more respect. Our lots are changed.
Make not our house your inn.

SIEFONG.

Your house, forsooth !

'Tis Chu's by right. The time Laotsen fixed
This day determines. He hath ceased to breathe.

FANSU.

Whoe'er thought otherwise ? By dying absent,
Charge of a tomb is saved.

A sudden qualm
Threatens, that takes us often,

As you pass,

Direct my maid bring opium.

Deaf old man,

I swoon! (*Screams.*)

(*Loudly.*)

Do you hear me? Clear our eyes of thee,
Or we shall teach you, shortly!

SIEFONG.

Drums and kettles!

(*After a pause.*)

I see, I must advise Chu of his fortunes.

FANSU.

You trouble us.

Well, shape your purpose plainly.

SIEFONG.

Is there a plainer way that leads to marriage,
I, the man, set before you?

FANSU.

Awe of sex!

I am not spoke with at this rate. A lady . . .

SIEFONG (*interrupting*).

A hundred, by your noise.

FANSU.

To whom a husband

Were more offensive, from our purity,
Than the most loathsome object, earth and nature
Own to displease the sense.

And dost thou hope,
The wearing of a gaudy suit,—unpaid for,
So blinds our eyes, we would take up with *thee*,—
A reckless scantling? . . . Faugh!

SIEFONG.

Although this face
Is not the finest face, it has been praised
By ladies of good judgment. Be more pliant.
My suit is soft and courteous . . . full of love!

FANSU.

Of love?

SIEFONG.

Of love!

FANSU.

Oh! thou unthrift of shame,
As well as of thy purse!

SIEFONG.

Rail as thou wilt;
I live as master of the house I stand in.

FANSU.

As master of my house? I think he is mad!

SIEFONG.

Why, thou art in the right; I have no sense left.
Could I have spent so much as I have done,—
Have torn in pieces all my fine estates,
Rocked all my understanding faculties
Into a slumber, the while dice and riot
Have wasted me to this, and not been mad?
Ha! ha! ha! ha! Widow of Youen, I am so!
Stark mad to desperation! Then be wary!
Prove to my suit obedient,—or your son . . .

FANSU (*aside*).Would I *could* scratch his eyes out!

What a spite!

Match me? I'll *match* him!(*Aloud.*) What would'st have me do?

SIEFONG (*shows a paper*).

First set your hand to this. It is a contract,
Strong and sufficient, and will hold in law.

FANSU.

La! we have no means of writing.

SIEFONG (*producing hair pencil and ink*).

I am provided.

FANSU.

Do you then hold the ink-cake, since needs must,
Kneel, and present your shoulder as a desk.

SIEFONG.

Why now I see thou 'lt prove conformable
When we are coupled.

(*Kneels.*) So.

(SIEFONG *hands the paper to FANSU.*)

FANSU.

Ah, me! the pencil.

(SIEFONG *raises the hair pencil over his shoulder: FANSU
slips to the door, where she stands holding it ajar.*)

SIEFONG.

Write your name fair, I pray.

(*Turning his head, without rising.*)

Ha! now, what means this?

FANSU (*holding the paper aloft*).

Thus your new-fancied hopes I bear away!
There's a position!

Well! your uncouth limbs
Know their true uses.

Since you are ambitious

Of some convenient unction for your back,
I give you notice, with brief grace withal,
The whipcord is at hand.

Siao, there!

Where is this wench? My people! every one!

[*Exit FANSU.*

SIEFONG (*rising*).

Gods! I am o'er-reached by her; but she's a woman,
A plain man's trouble; one who is fitliest wedded
Unto herself. I cannot frighten her
Into this match, nor punish her rejection;
Since I am the only witness that her father . . .
Would that I dealt in thunder!

Enter LAOTSEN.

LAOTSEN.

Pray commend me

To your lady, noble Fansu.

SIEFONG.

Fo be thanked!

LAOTSEN.

Why thank you, Fo?

SIEFONG.

That I am no lady's man.
The painted bubbles, floating down the stream
Of time, buoyed up they know not how nor think,
Until they burst, and then . . . *out vanity!*

LAOTSEN (*aside*).

Siefong! I have heard reports.

(*Aloud.*) How farest, old friend?

SIEFONG.

Just as I list, in storms.

I am no anvil
Whereon to beat your wits to shape.

"Old friend!"

My reverend fellow.

(Imitating the derisive tone of FANSU.)

If you are ambitious
Of some convenient unction for your back,
I give you notice, with brief grace withal,
The whipeord is at hand.

My people there!

(As SIEFONG is making his exit.)

LAOTSEN.

Know first, who 't is you sentence.

SIEFONG.

What's to me?
Go to! and 'ware the bastinado. "Friend!"

LAOTSEN.

Am not I? Is Laotsen not so, Siefong?

SIEFONG.

Laotsen! what! . . . art thou? . . . Oh! sweet revenge!

LAOTSEN.

Oh! sweet revenge!

SIEFONG.

No, no. But welcome back
To Nankin! Ha! ha! ha! I am so glad!

LAOTSEN.

To Nankin? Would that you could say my home!

SIEFONG.

This is your home.

LAOTSEN (*with deep feeling*).

'T is not the walls, familiar,
The porcelain dome, locality and site,
That make man's home, but living eyes around him,
Stairs paved with springing hearts, locked hands for
latches.

On cordial tones, bright faces,—*not on bricks*,
Are home's foundations laid!

These *are* amissing?

SIEFONG.

I were loth to sound the first report; but since
This blemish is no secret of your house . . .
Fansu is transmuted. Humble-spoken maid,
She *was*, I needs must own; meek wife, or seemed so;
But Fortune's favours still are woman's bane;
And who would seek these qual'ties in your daughter,
Might as well dig for gold in mines of coal.
For Chu! . . . (shrugging his shoulders.)

You ask a home? Whew! you've a home!

LAOTSEN.

No! like the stricken deer, through many soils,
I've fled in search of covert, but the shaft
Sticks fast.

SIEFONG.

It needs must rankle.

(*Aside.*) Now for vengeance!

(*Aloud.*) Having reclaimed your fortunes, why not marry?
'T is not too late to boast a son and heir!

LAOTSEN.

I cannot hope it.

SIEFONG.

Devil's luck! Why not?

It is the surest way in my poor counsel,
And eke the pleasantest. Choose you a wife.

LAOTSEN.

'T were feasible. But first I'll have some proof
That Fansu is unworthy as her son.

How goes the world with thee?

SIEFONG.

On wretched axles.

Borne down by lies, an injured man is Siefong!

LAOTSEN.

Indeed?

SIEFONG.

I am now I know not who, where, what,—
No, palace—captain.

LAOTSEN.

Well, if thy misfortunes

Show not, as in a mirror, the rent face
Of a bad life,—(*breaks off.*)

But join me at the tombs

Of my sire's sires.

SIEFONG.

The place has long been built on.

I doubt a tomb remains.

LAOTSEN (*indignantly*).

My impious daughter

SIEFONG.

I'd slack no time to mow my latter-math,
Were I Laotsen.

LAOTSEN.

Did I ask for proof
Of her degeneracy? Can I have stronger?
Thy advice was good. I'll marry!

SIEFONG.

Ha! what's that?

Let me hear that again!

LAOTSEN.

Proclaim, we offer
A thousand pieces for the fairest she,
In Nankin, for our spouse,—maid, wife, or widow!

SIEFONG.

A thousand pieces! What it is to be rich!
Lilin's the very party. Here's a windfall!

LAOTSEN.

About it! and inform me how you prosper.
At our ruined tombs.

SIEFONG.

Consider it accomplished.

[Exit SIEFONG whistling.]

LAOTSEN.

Oh! drop of balm, that in our soul's contentment
Is sweetest, crowning e'en domestic bliss!
To know we have a son . . . a son, to teach
The interchange of soul—to tenderness
To unclothe the unaccustomed heart—an heir,
To meet our enemies dauntless at the gate;

Thou best of life! that I shall never taste ;
Or have my memory revered, and my tombs
Honoured with filial sacrifice . . . Oh! yet,
The honest dew of labour through my prime,
And the brains' sweat in these declining days . .
May they be guerdoned!

Enter Attendants.

1ST ATTENDANT (*seizing LAOTSEN*).

Ancient slave! we'll teach you
How to accost great ladies. *Yours*, this house,
Is it, you dog?

LAOTSEN (*drily*).

I rather think it is,
Howe'er you came to know it.

2ND ATTENDANT.

Give you welcome?
Unto the whipping-post!

LAOTSEN (*struggling*).

Where is your lady?

(*As the Attendants are forcing LAOTSEN out.*)

Enter CHU.

LAOTSEN.

Why do you use me thus?

CHU.

The matter here?

1ST ATTENDANT.

Your mother
Ordered this reverend knave the bastinado,
If it please your worship.

CHU.

Knave, it doth not please me ;
I am indifferent ; yet would not lose
My insight into motives, to be throned
Ruler celestial.

LAOTSEN.

Here, at your request,
I've not deserved . . .

CHU.

Tut, name it not. I know sure,
I enjoy my wit,—I hope, sagacity :—
For wealth and honour, let them go ! . . . I'm wise.

LAOTSEN.

Hold off ! I beg. A word, Chu, in your ear.

CHU.

It is the noblest attribute of Genius,
To incline an ear unto less favoured mortals,
As if such gifts were common in the world.
You'll find I am armed at all points, though, in sooth,
The greater wonder ! courtly in my greatness.

LAOTSEN.

Then I may whisper ?

CHU (*to Attendants*).

Go, knaves ! close the door,
That no conspiring word may pierce the air,
That lies beyond, lest some convulsive heave
Echo REBELLION !

Out ! our aims are deadly
Against the peace of China. Listen not !

[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

Enter FANSU.

My mother here! We must adjourn our council.

FANSU (*reading a paper*).

Call *this* a contract! (*sees CHU.*)

There's a sight abroad.

But bless us goodness! who let in that rag?

LAOTSEN (*bowing*).

A relative of your house.

CHU (*aside*).

The knowing spirit!

FANSU.

What, this mean creature, Chu?

LAOTSEN.

Not mean, I trust;

Though in health and fortune bankrupt.

CHU (*aside*).

Well put in!

(*Aloud.*) A talented critic! Quite a pregnant statesman!

FANSU.

Bankrupt and statesman!

LAOTSEN.

Have been precedents;

But *I* am your humblest cousin.

FANSU.

Who for winters

Hath lain perdu in tempests. Troth, I wish not
To see or hear of such.

Great Chu, my blessing,

Out of doors with him! Only give a doit,
And we are eaten up with swarming vermin.

LAOTSEN.

I heard, there was reserved on your estate
An annual fund, inappropriate to the poor
Of your own blood.

FANSU.

We are no such fools, *our* house.
Besides we have no relations but *rich* people,
Have we, Chu ?

CHU.

None : our great desert forbids it.

FANSU (*to CHU*).

The new viceroy is at hand. His retinue
Halt at the temple, from whose blazoned gates
Hang banners.

(*CHU goes to the casement.*)

LAOTSEN.

Near our family tombs.

FANSU.

To allude
Unto such things 'fore ladies ! Conjure up
Horrid ideas of death. I am overcome !
Oh, dear ! (*vehemently.*)

We want no tombs, low-blooded fellow !

LAOTSEN.

Thou art turned devil ! The first breath I drew
Moved here, and *here* I'll spend my last.

FANSU.

A likely
Tale, you licked provender here.
My carpenters
Have engines for petitionary people
All ready.

What is 't, Chu ?

CHU.

The glut of people
Throng through the ways towards the gates.
(*Aside.*) I feel
An impulse to do something to be talked of.
(*To LAOTSEN.*) Your ear.

This lord ! I am vowed.

(Whispers.)

FANSU.

The ragged kinsman !
Faugh ! He is too coarse for you, Chu, to converse with.
Mean, trivial, cheap, infectious.

CHU (*tetchily.*)

Mother, I
Know what I have to do in mine own business.
(*Aside to LAOTSEN.*)
What I intend I'll act . . . but, mum ! no more ;
Lest Fansu mar maturing of our project
To an assured result. Where can I see you ?

LAOTSEN.

I reach the suburb tombs within an hour.
You will not fail ?

FANSU (*angrily.*)

Where *be* these knaves I keep ?
Quit the house of him by the head and shoulders.

LAOTSEN (*aside*).

Oh, sex! Oh, change!

(*To FANSU.*) That haggard hath a fall,
That soars with rotten wings.

[*Exit* LAOTSEN.

FANSU.

Was ever heard
So great impertinence?

CHU (*apart*).

The earth's too weak,
To bear the weighty project I've in hand,
Without an earthquake!

FANSU.

Shall we, Chu, go forth
To grace this governor?

CHU.

Cap *his* brazen head?
Not for the proudest image of them all
Will Chu commit idolatry.

FANSU.

We may
Be held high-minded. 'Tis already said
You are proud.

CHU.

They are deceived that fancy so;
Though I, forsooth, have a natural vein for eminence
Might make a fool proud, I confess . . . but I
Do but assert my place, which is . . . No matter!
I am myself for ever!

FANSU.

Then we'll wait

Till specially entreated,—(*aside*) though, indeed,
I've found would make me welcome in this scroll,—

(*Regarding the paper in her hand.*)

Which Siefong's haste mistook . . .

(*She pauses, then turns to CHU.*)

(*Aloud.*) You never should

Of him that's 'neath you in his clothes take notice.

CHU.

What's man's outside? The linings I regard.

FANSU.

We, who are the salt of the earth should be more chary.
Chu, 't is a fault.

CHU.

A fault! I, Chu?

No, mother.

I am a law unto myself, and scorn
The narrow grasp and carping of the world.
To me, or right or wrong own no relation,
Save in my will; that's aye . . . to condescend.

FANSU.

Out on the low world!

I have counsel for you,

At dinner.

CHU.

I have elsewhere a weighty call,
Though I lose, at every wiping of thy mouth,
Sayings, of Confucius worthy.

(*Abstractedly.*) Grant this hand
Should give a morsel to the hungry worms!

FANSU.

You dream with open eyes.

CHU.

All 's one for that :

What I do think, I think.

Great business

For my country hastes me hence.

FANSU.

You mean to grace

The viceroy's entrance ?

CHU.

I, the poet Chu !

Can he instruct me ?

Would I ne'er breathed more,

If I do know that creature in this empire

With whom I 'd change.

Have birds'-nest soup for supper,

That, 'mid distill'd raptures, I may marry

Base earth and heaven in a thought, or dream

Familiarly an heroic poem, else—

That I am his Highness.

You may take my hand ;

I 'm humble ever,—'t is your son's first glory !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Dilapidated Ruin : the City in the distance.

SIEFONG and KAUTSU.

KAUTSU.

'T was thus you guessed my lurking place?

I marvel

You cared to track me.

SIEFONG.

Why I wanted speech.

I'm pledged to remove the Viceroy ; save you'll buy
His life.

KAUTSU.

You mock.

SIEFONG.

There hath a mandarin

Bid high to wive the handsomest she in Nankin.

KAUTSU.

Your riddles sort not with my wretched lot.

SIEFONG.

For fair, so fair, we have not to seek far.

KAUTSU (*coldly*).

That's neither here nor there.

SIEFONG.

I have expended
A moiety of the thousand coins, whereat
His Excellence' life was rated ; and my part
I must fulfil, or all refund.

This box

(Shows a small ivory box.)

Imprisons that pernicious scent I spoke of.
Locked in a quarry were his heart, 't would search,
And kill him to inhale it.

(After a pause.) Shall he perish ?

KAUTSU.

Can I avert such guilt ?

*Enter LILIN.**(She stops short, unperceived.)*

SIEFONG.

You have a wife
Who 'd bring a thousand dollars. Just the sum.

KAUTSU.

You 'd seem a little fouler than most foul,
To try my nature.

SIEFONG.

I 've expressed my purpose,
And hope you will part with Lilin, for the price
That will redeem me.

KAUTSU.

Sir, 't would bark mine honour,
And my mere trunk of man, for a world's wonder,
Leave naked, stript of flower in its spring,
To perish lastingly.

SIEFONG.

'T were piety
To yield up all things for a parent's sake.

KAUTSU.

My sweat ; my blood I'd spare not.

From this crime
To free your soul, I'd throw down life ;

But for

My heart of hearts, my more than life . . . *My wife!*
Take my defiance, father ! Than resign her,
I'd let thee wrap thee with the steam of death,
As with a shroud, and still not grant you *that*,
You ask me. Perish wholly an thou wilt !
For never shall my Lilin's ruin relieve thee.

SIEFONG.

A filial resolution ! For her ruin,
Methinks 't is here more imminent. To uplift
The being thou lovest, clear thy parent's soul,
By the same act . . what end could you propose
Worthier, or more exalted ? I will leave you,
Lilin to advertise of her high prospects.

[Exit SIEFONG.]

KAUTSU.

Nay, stay : you would in vain, sir, fright her soul
With possibility, I could make sale . . .
He's gone to seek her ! Well ?

She will not believe him.

(LILIN comes forward.)

LILIN.

What is this difference with your father, Kautsu ?

KAUTSU.

Nothing . . A folly . . Sin.

That from the flower,
The sweetest in life's bouquet, love domestic,
He should draw poison . . . this is nothing new.

LILIN.

Yet it disordered you ?

KAUTSU.

Is 't not enough
To know, that I am proscribed, you perishing ?

LILIN.

Were such lot irremediable, it were.

KAUTSU (*in a voice of surprise*).

Lilin !

LILIN.

Methinks, to stretch not forth your hand,
To seize for me that wealth and state, which chance
Places within your reach, betrays light love.

KAUTSU.

Thou hast overheard, but not the whole,
Nor knowest
What, did I clutch them for thee, goes along
With wealth and state, girl.

LILIN (*with enthusiasm*).

Power and luxury,
The master spirits of the world ! To dance,
And sing, and jest, exchange court breath, to laugh,—
Even at the wagging of a feather, to laugh,—
Banquets abroad mid lanterns, all delights
That i' faith ! private damsels never dream of.

KAUTSU.

And what besides ?

LILIN.

A hem !

KAUTSU (*solemnly*).

Another husband !

LILIN.

Oh, above all ! my person singled forth,
To make all meaner beauties envy me ;

KAUTSU (*turning pale*).

This should be sure a dream.

LILIN.

I have a task
To enjoin, I fear you dare not to accept ?

KAUTSU.

Dare ?

Like a careless pilot, I would cast
On the pale rock of death this bark to please you.

LILIN.

Wilt swear to that ?

KAUTSU.

With any form of oath.

LILIN.

Then pledge thy love for me.

KAUTSU.

In every mood !

(*Kisses her.*)

Lie it within mortality, I 'll act
Your wish.

LILIN.

You shall (*She stops short.*)

KAUTSU.

That, which appears to you
So terrible to name, I 'll joy to compass.

LILIN.

Then you must (*Stops short.*)

KAUTSU.

What? My innocent Lilin, speak!

LILIN.

Leave your affection to me, and consign me,
By Siefong, to this liberal purchaser.

KAUTSU.

What did you say?

LILIN.

Say? Sell me, and buy bread.
Aid my preferment.

KAUTSU.

Oh, what words to infect
Rose-coloured Patience' clear and lovely front
With leprosy!

Art Lilin?

LILIN.

Love, I pray you,
To keep your oath.

KAUTSU.

Thou look'st now, I should weep,
Hang 'bout thy neck, but thou hast not such power
To shake my manhood; neither do I think,
There can be aught good in thee worth my kneeling
For grace, you are lost so utterly.

Heart rive not!

(*Bursts into a paroxysm of tears.*)

Re-enter SIEFONG.

SIEFONG.

By Tien! What 's here to do?

LILIN.

He hath 'consented,
But needs must play the woman at our parting.

SIEFONG (*aside*).

My path is smoothed before me.

Who can trace
The mazes of a woman's mutable will?
This mood and that inclines it.

(*Aloud.*) Then thou art willing?

LILIN.

Let others court the shade, I 'll clasp the sun.
Kautsu, be heartened up by my example.
But fortune prove propitious, and it will,
Sooner than you suppose, you 'll twist anew
The ivy gadding from its stem. Farewell!

SIEFONG (*to LILIN*).

I 'll guide thee to thy greatness,
(*Aside to KAUTSU.*) And console thee,
I need not stanch more breath.

(*As SIEFONG is leaving with LILIN.*)

KAUTSU.

A moment, woman!
(*LILIN halts.*)

After thine own solemnities, I bid
Thee to *my* wedding!

LILIN.

Thine! Why! whom wouldst marry?

KAUTSU (*with solemn pathos*).

One who will not forsake me, though, like thee,
She loves to go forth robed in pall.

Yew, cypress,
Shall make us garlands; torches too shall burn,
To light our sleep-compelling chamber, where
Is nought but all oblivion, endless silence.
There in her nuptial sheets, I shall sleep well,
Free from all care, with my pale, marrowless bride.

(KAUTSU turns away: LILIN stands irresolute: her gaze
is without perception, as if she understood not: then,
with a sudden start, she is going off in the wrong
direction.)

SIEFONG.

Why from the city?

LILIN (*half bewildered*).

I had forgot.

Your hand.

SIEFONG.

Do your eyes fail you? This way.

(*Aside.*) Worth the dollars!

[*Exeunt SIEFONG with LILIN.*]

KAUTSU.

(*After remaining some time immovable, as if stupified.*)

This is a hideous dream! Oh! that it were
The sleep of death, if I awake not soon!
Passions surround my intellectual powers,

And drive me into frenzy.

Lilin left me ?

Lilin, my treasure ? . . . Bosom-wolf !

Gone ! Whither ?

Lilin ! Lilin ! Lilin !

(*Rushes out.*)

SCENE III.

(*Hilly country, covered with mounds : dilapidated monuments : an ancient temple to the right. LAOTSEN discovered kneeling before a tomb.*)

LAOTSEN (*rising*).

Their manes are appeased, my forefathers !
Full many a time, methought, they drew my curtains,
And, with a lifting of the brow, and waving
Of hand, would lure me hither.

Now they rest,
Knowing, as spirits that have shifted off
Their earth, the sacrifices due to them
For years, from me and mine, at length are paid.

Enter SIEFONG.

SIEFONG.

Laotsen, I have succeeded in procuring
A most incomparable wife. You have her
At your own price,—a bargain !

LAOTSEN.

I have known thee
An approved soldier, Siefong ; fierce, withal,
But brave. You say you have lost your captainship.
To token other times, without inquiry,
In trustful friendship, I now reinstate you.

SIEFONG.

You re-appoint me ! Death ! I am like to glisten
In the high way of preferment !

Are you sane ?

LAOTSEN.

You will understand me presently.

My grandson !

Attend our conference :

Thou shalt see strange sleights.

Enter CHU.

CHU (*approaching LAOTSEN with grave and formal carriage.*)

Know ; since we met ; I have revolved over
Our last discourse, and, in my silent soul,
Struck out my future greatness, which events
Would fain precipitate.

The road is lined

With mien at arms.

From forth the valley's gorge,
Clouds harbinger where very near upon
The successor of Hysyehu, approaches.
The trumpets sound, and 'mid the moving press
None minded me. But mandarins are but men,
And Chu is . . . *As he is !* . . . No matter.

SIEFONG.

Hell !

And I lag here ?

(About to make his exit.) A fair noon to you.LAOTSEN *(as he is leaving)*.

Siefong !

I entreat a minute.

(SIEFONG stops short.)

CHU.

What is he ? A leaguer ?

You, if you please, may whisper what I am ;

Alone in mind and fashion.

SIEFONG *(gruffly)*.

What says Chu ?

LAOTSEN *(to CHU)*.

You hear, he knows you well.

And so the last

Governor of Nankin fell by steel of thine ?

SIEFONG.

By steel of Chu ? Is he so crank ? Ha ! ha !

CHU.

I hate when fools must giggle.

Were you, fellow,

Sworn to the league, you'd know who struck the blow

To emancipate Nankin ; but to silence thee,

And cower thy puny soul into the dust,

I will produce the patriot vowed his name

To eternize, by offtaking from the light

The Viceroy just invested. *Now, who'll laugh ?*

SIEFONG (*aside*).

What does the ass intend ?

LAOTSEN.

You would not have us

Infer that *you* . . .

CHU.

Ah, I, alas! for my part,
What should I do in my obscurity,
But converse with the muses? 'T were not likely
One man could compass all. Yet, peradventure,
Did any glorious opportunity
Make but her foretop subject to my hold,
I might! . . but I hate boasting . . What I can,
I will. And what *that* is, not far from hence,
There be who have seen and heard, ere now . .

But I

Must not cry up my merit.

LAOTSEN.

But dost know

The man who is pledged to kill his Excellency ?

CHU.

Hast thou no apprehension? Must I touch
Upon this destined honour, at whose bruit
The world will pale, and Poets, yet unborn,
Make proud their muses? In which faith, I now
Prophecy to myself, that after ages,
While the twin stars set in the north, shall ring
With memory of this deed.

LAOTSEN.

What deed, Great Chu ?

CHU.

Erect your mind !

One that shall drown all story,
 And give this arm to immortality,
 Let all our chroniclers do what they durst.

LAOTSEN.

Art thou ?

CHU.

Your words drop from you in a sloth,
 As they were infidels. But truth will out
 Though drowning in earth's centre.

He that now
 Enters our gates in state, is doomed to perish,
 By one, who, humble as he seems and ranks,
 Is Nankin's greatest patriot.

Doubtest thou ?

LAOTSEN.

Can it be ?

CHU.

Doubt no longer !

Burst not, sirs,
 With admiration. *I myself, Chu,—I*
 Will slay him !

SIEFONG.

This passes ! Burst did you say ? I split
 With merry spleen. Chu 'll do it ! Ha ! ha ! ha !

*(Laughs uproariously.)**(CHU and SIEFONG place themselves in attitude)**(Flourish of trumpets in the distance.)*

*Previous to the entrance of a vast concourse of people accom-
 panying a grand procession of soldiery.*

LAOTSEN (*apart*).

I catch the sounds of welcome as they swell,
Full as the harmony of winds ; and now,
Deep strings strike in, and hoarser instruments.

(*After a pause of emotion.*)

Oh! Sweet as nature's springtide melodies
To some worn pilgrim, first, with glistening eyes,
Greeting his native valley, whence the hum
Of rural gladness, herds, and bleating flocks,
The chirp of birds, blithe voices, lowing kine,
The dash of waters, reed, or rustic pipe,
Blent with the dulcet, distance-mellowed bell,
Come like the echo of his early joys.
So sweet, yea sweeter swell these strains triumphant,
Upon my ears. They vibrate like the dream
Of my bless'd boyhood, and yield back its *hope* !
Where was it hid so long ? (Pauses.)

(*With a sudden start.*) Ha ! 't is not hope ;—
This is my soul's fruition ! (*Proudly*) The desire
Which urged me on through life's accomplished ! Lo !
I stand the foremost in my native province !

(*After the procession has formed.*)

OFFICER.

Obedient to your Excellency's orders,
Your escort wait you.

LAOTSEN.

Thanks ! You have done well.

Upon this burial-place, to him most sacred,
Laotsen, in due honour to his sires,
Assumes the rank which his celestial highness
Hath honoured him withal, and warmly greets ye,
His fellow-citizens !

(LAOTSEN *throws aside his mantle and discovers himself handsomely attired.*)

(*Flourish: loud shouts.*)

CITIZENS.

Welcome back to home!
Welcome, Laotsen! Governor of Nankin!

LAOTSEN.

Many and hearty thankings to you all.

SIEFONG.

S'blood! we live in a topsy-turvy world.

(*Aside. Taking the essence box from his vest.*)

A thousand dollars! A friend's life!

(*Looks at the essence box.*)

(*Shrugging his shoulders.*) I'll think on 't.

(*Returns the essence box to his vest.*)

CHU.

Are we surprised? What strange delusions mock
My senses? Do I dream?

Oh, Fo! Where am I?

SIEFONG (*with a sneer*).

Where a fool is.

CHU (*disdainfully*).

I am not of that species

For you to instruct.

LAOTSEN (*to CHU*).

Unsay all in a word,
That yet may do thee office.

CHU (*heroically*).

What I have spoke,
When, like a spy, you looked upon my passes,

Is spoke. I sink under no common action,
But sell my life to fame!

Chu's name shall ring
Through length and breadth of China!

LAOTSEN.

Pride and valour,
Virtue, and vice, can take no course extreme,
But your vain-glorious flash will parallel.
(*To Guard.*)
Away with him to closest custody.

(*CHU is arrested.*)

CHU.

World! whose vicissitudes cast great men down,
Whither wilt now?

SIEFONG.

Why, to the devil!

CHU.

Death,
Caught by such brave aspiring, is to give
Eternity a glorious breath!
My dungeon!

(*Grandly.*)
Fate,—I despise thee!

SIEFONG (*to CHU, as he is making his exit.*)
Humble yourself, coxcomb!

(*CHU stops short, and regards SIEFONG for some seconds
with a supercilious air.*)

CHU (*closing his eyes, and in a tone of supreme contempt.*)
I have nothing to say to you.

SIEFONG.

Now you have said.

[*Exit CHU, guarded.*]

LAOTSEN.

Siefong, did not thy voice deliver to me,
How that my aim to arrive at another wedlock
Looked promising? This fair one . . .

Where resides she?

SIEFONG.

I'll bring her to the palace. Such a creature!
When wilt inspect her? Eh?

LAOTSEN.

This afternoon.

SIEFONG.

She's dead cheap. Look the purse out.

Mind, good money.

LAOTSEN.

By virtue of thy reappointment, be it
Thy care to invent some show to solemnize
In maskery, our high instalment.

(*LAOTSEN is borne on high.*)

On!

Set on to the vice-regal palace!

SIEFONG.

Sound!

To this great fellow, and be hanged! Sound out!

(*Flourish of trumpets.*)

[*Exeunt in grand procession.*]

END OF ACT THIRD.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Vice-regal Palace.

Enter FANSU, SIAO, and a Household Officer.

OFFICER.

Who shall I acquaint his mightiness craves audience.

FANSU (*to Officer*).

Fansu, I told you ; the rich widow, whom
All the world knows by name, and sure the Viceroy.
I, Fansu, visit him.

What *do* you stare for ?

Have you not had your orders ?

[*Exit Officer.*

On my virtue !

A handsome suite enough !

Chu's apprehension

Is clearly a mistake. But, notwithstanding,
I am ashamed to think what I must say now.
To think ? The shift of lowness, quite beneath
A lady of my condition ! I'm not used
To be catechised, I thank my stars, but have
The talk all to myself : go late to bed,

Say my own prayers, and, as becomes a widow,
Go my own way to heaven.

SIAO.

His Highness must
Acknowledge it your privilege.

FANSU.

Of course.
But I 'm impatient of the least curb, you know.

SIAO (*aside*).

I do indeed !

FANSU (*affectedly*).

Do I not melt like honey ?

SIAO.

You look a virgin in your twentieth year.

FANSU.

A widow is a maid, that is in a measure,
And with a difference.

SIAO.

'T is quite the mode !
Your head-tire is so becoming.

FANSU (*affectedly*).

Do you think so ?

SIAO.

It makes you look quite heavenly.

FANSU (*affectedly*).

Do you think so ?

I esteemed it near the common, that it had
No extraordinary grace, quite worn.
But, by my Fan ! I *have* a tire a-coming.

(After a pause.)

Take post without, and give me a minute's notice,
Before this ruler enters, to repair me,

[Exit SIAO.

Suppose I *were* seduced, upon much courting,
To wed again, and lavish all myself
Upon his greatness!

Who is obtruding on us?

Enter LAOTSEN.

Bless me! the rag! New furbished!

Who'd have thought

He could find access?

(To LAOTSEN.) Go your errand, pray.
Waive adorations.

LAOTSEN.

Lady, I'd inquire

FANSU *(turning away)*.

Not of *me*, sirrah!

LAOTSEN.

Nay, but I must beg

FANSU *(in great trepidation)*.

This is no time and place to beg.

I told you

You mistook me wholly; quite, old man, I assure you.
So go your ways! I would not be seen conversing
With such as you are, *tête-à-tête*, for the world!

Re-enter SIAO, hastily.

SIAO *(in a low voice to FANSU)*.

'Tis the Viceroy's self!

FANSU.

Oh, Fo! don't fib!

SIAO.

No fib!

FANSU.

The rag invested! La! What *have* I spoken?
I could bite off my tongue.

Child, stay without!

[*Exit* SIAO]

LAOTSEN.

What would you? Quick! We wait a visitor,
More interesting.

FANSU.

Tremor of my nerves!

LAOTSEN.

Be brief.

FANSU.

I've come to acquaint your Excellence,
How my son Chu . . .

LAOTSEN.

What that inflated traitor!
A banned free-leaguer!

FANSU.

Not so, please your highness.
Because of his genius, he talks indiscreetly,
But yet no member of the League!

LAOTSEN.

How know you?

FANSU (*giving a paper*).

Here, sir, is a list of all the conspirators.
You'll not find Chu enrolled.

LAOTSEN (*glancing over the paper*).

"The Vindicator,—

His list of the members of the League who're sworn
To the opium law repeal, and who condemn
To death her viceroys, till the opium gas
Be free as the air in Nankin."

(*Apart.*) Who is he,

This vindicator? Not affixed his name!
What ho, there!

Enter Officer.

Cause the instant apprehension
Of every individual whose name
Is here subscribed. (*Gives paper.*)
About it.

[*Exit Officer.*

(*Turns to FANSU.*) Now, this record,
How came it to your hands?

FANSU (*aside*).

What shall I say?

I must not own that Siefong . . . horrid fellow!
(*Aloud.*) I found the paper, sir.

LAOTSEN.

That will not pass.

Unfold how you obtained it, or your son . . .

FANSU.

My heart it pants within me.

Oh, my lord!

I had it of Siefong.

LAOTSEN (*sternly*).

'T was the braggart Chu.

FANSU.

Tears force their way into my eyes.

LAOTSEN.

Not Siefong !

FANSU.

Not Chu, the empire's pride ! A genius !

LAOTSEN (*sternly*).

An empty bubble, woman ; and *thou* art . . .

FANSU.

Here's some mistake ! I'm Lady Fansu !

Whom

Thought you me, sir ?

LAOTSEN (*sternly*).

A very puppet ! made

Of clothes and painting ! Miserably forfeit

To pride and fashions !

FANSU.

What is it I hear ?

(*She kneels.*) Great Lord !

LAOTSEN (*in the same solemn voice in which he addressed
the words to her at the close of the first Act*).

LAOTSEN'S DAUGHTER, *rise !*

FANSU.

What voice ?

What words ?

(*She lifts her eyes to LAOTSEN, and gazes intently at him.*)

What shape and countenance ?

I am lost !

My head turns ! splits ! aches !

(*After a pause, in an humble voice.*)

Ought I not to know you ?

LAOTSEN (*sternly*).

Against your will.

FANSU.

My father !

LAOTSEN.

Name long since,

And all it bound thee to, forgot.

FANSU.

I pray, sir . . .

LAOTSEN (*with startling severity*).

When did you last pay sacrifice ?

FANSU.

My blood,

It has the cramp ; my nerves are overturning.

LAOTSEN (*severely*).

Our ruined tombs ! My much professing daughter,
The fund for relatives spent on gaudy plumes,
Fantastic flowers, embroidery . . .

FANSU.

I crave pardon !

LAOTSEN.

Stand up, I say.

(FANSU rises.)

Attend me! To the dread
Of disobedience and unnatural blood,
Our whole estate in lands, and debts, and leases,
And present monies, we reclaim.

FANSU (*in a deprecatory tone*).

Good sir,

You touch me to the quick!

But please adopt Chu.

LAOTSEN.

For that piece of inflation, whom I shame
To call my grandson, I will consider further.
Now leave me, till the festival. Attend
Dressed, as of old, in decency and neatness.
Reduce you to your natural form and habit.

FANSU (*humbly*).

I begin to feel myself already, sir,
Another woman.

May I come in satin?

LAOTSEN.

Coarse simple dowlas.

FANSU.

Gall! Oh, dear! In dowlas!

I shall be a scarecrow

Look ridiculous!

(*After a pause.*)

I *may* wear my pin, my feather?—bring my fan?

LAOTSEN (*gravely*).

No flimsy tinsel trappings evermore.

FANSU.

Alas ! alas ! Good-bye, sir ! Well-a-day !

(Going, she returns.)

I've a new tire a-coming—*must be paid for*.
You'll not object to my appearing in it ?
I know, when you see it on me, you'll approve
The style. So tasty ! Nothing gaudy, father ;
Else I would not ask.

LAOTSEN.

Well, well.

FANSU *(courtesying)*.

I humbly thank you.

And, pardon me . . . by your leave ;—

(After a pause of hesitation.) My armlets, sir ?

LAOTSEN.

Yes : go !

FANSU.

And ear-rings ? They are of coloured glass.

LAOTSEN *(impatiently)*.

Leave me, Fansu.

FANSU *(coaxingly)*.

One little favour more. *(Pauses.)*

I bought a dress of amber-figured crape ;

It's very quiet ;—not at all pretending.

So I know you'd like it.

(After a pause, in a pleading tone.) May I put it on ?

LAOTSEN.

E'en as thou wilt.

FANSU *(demurely)*.

I am very much obliged.

[Exit FANSU with a low courtesy.]

LAOTSEN (*after some thought*).

I'll learn of Siefong.

Kautsu's revelation,
That file forestalls in all respects, except
That I most wish to know,—who is *the leader*
Of these free opium leaguers?

Though so strictly
Searched for, yet Kautsu laughs, as yet, at justice.
I'll have him rated at some high reward,
Since that he hides so close. Why hide at all?
I had sworn that o'er *his* brow, sincerity
Had shed her damask glow.

Oh, fine dissembling!
Whose abstract skill doth blind the actor so,
That he put on the very shape of truth!

Certain, he spake no more than what this warning,
Left at my gates last night, corroborates.

(*Takes a paper from his vest, and reads.*)

“Guard against treachery! Nor dare prohibit
Opium, like Hysyehu; from whose assassin
I'd save you.”

Kautsu's hand! We'll track him yet!

Enter SIEFONG with LILIN.

SIEFONG.

Laotsen, I present you here a damsel
Who tops all eulogy, and who, in honour,
On thine own terms, believe at thy devotion.

LAOTSEN (*contemplating LILIN*).

A heavenly vision!

SIEFONG (*sneeringly*).

Espouse her! She's no cloud.

An heir to worship at his father's tomb,
May bless the sun of Nankin. At the worst,
You'll have on whom to settle all your wealth;
A gentle being, fitted to divide
Your cares, and double pleasure; like a star,
Lighting to every morrow.

LAOTSEN (*contemplating LILIN*).

Her bright orbs

Are drowned in vaporous pearl.

SIEFONG (*sneeringly*).

The founts, which, locked

In woman's heart, not centuries could exhaust,
Play at short warning. Who'd mind such cheap water,
Unless he were mad?

LAOTSEN (*contemplating LILIN*).

And now, with deeper light,

Thick on her tearful cheek, the glowing spots
Seem drops of fire.

SIEFONG (*derisively*).

We know they're a volcano,

The sex, and shoot out sparkles.

Where's the money?

LAOTSEN.

Open that chest. . The key, sir. . (*Gives a key.*)

And reach forth

One of the purses.

SIEFONG (*apart*).

Here is lusty pillage!

Yet not more welcome than revenge on Fansu!

(SIEFONG opens the chest, and overhauls the contents.)

LAOTSEN (*contemplating LILIN*).

A glorious palace !
Guarded with charms from base to battlement !
Her feet like golden lilies, swan-like gait,
Her willow waist, and eyes . . . those silver seas,
Graceful in grief ! silence that thrills like music,
O'er hands and arms enclasped, the azure veins
Wind here and there, as if, in her abstraction,
They had forgot their errand to her heart.

SIEFONG (*apart*).

Here be a gem worth money. I will have it
Set, and will wear it for my old friend's sake.
(*With a low chuckle.*)

He cannot last ; so wanton in his shroud !

(SIEFONG secures the jewel.)

LAOTSEN (*still lost in contemplation of LILIN*).

And now, methinks, her genius conjures up
A fiercer war against me, not to be
Resisted. That defensive crimson, which
Breaks sudden o'er a cheek and neck, whose hue
Vied whiteness with the lily,—needless helps
To strengthen charms so potent !

Ha ! Her eyes,
Have spied out my discomfiture. She rallies
Her every grace of attitude and motion,
Draws forth her whole divine artillery,
And crowds into a storm.

My ranks of reason
Are all disbanded, or the slaves of passion.

(SIEFONG closes the chest and swaggers towards LAOTSEN.)

SIEFONG.

Here be the key, sir, and the purse.

LAOTSEN.

It holds
Inadequate payment for the pleasure, glory,
Content above the world, heart-bliss beyond it,
It makes mine own.

SIEFONG.

I am not particular
For a few pieces more or less. Some day
We'll throw for the difference.

(Aside, shrugging his shoulders.)

Warm blood, which is
The young man's slave, the old man makes his god.

LAOTSEN.

I'd question of that list.—I cannot now.

[Exit SIEFONG, whistling.]

(LAOTSEN descends from his seat, and approaches LILIN.)

LAOTSEN.

What may I, sweet one, do to drive from you
This sullen humour?

LILIN.

I am set to sale;
Exiled from him I love.

LAOTSEN.

Who would turn thee
To gain had sold his part of Paradise
For cash. Forget him!

LILIN.

FORGET! There's not a line of his, but's stamped
Upon the red-leaved tablet of my heart,
Not to be rent. 'Tis parcel of my soul.
FORGET! I may not living. Shall not dead.

LAOTSEN.

And yet he has shook you off for dross.

LILIN.

He is poor!

LAOTSEN.

Then joy thee in this change, not grieve for him.

(After a pause.)

Thou shalt have worldly pleasure at command,
Above the reach or compass of thy thought.
Soft lodging, services in plate, attendance,
Variety of recreations, music,
Rich garnitures, attires . . . See, behold!
What thou art queen of! *(Goes to the chest.)*

Here's a rope of pearl;

And here a robe of that bespangled blue,
That decks the heavens o' nights; which thou shalt wear,
And so come in like starlight, hid with jewels,
The spoil of provinces! So, that that man,
Who doth despise heaven's law, thou wilt renounce.

LILIN.

That man is my husband!

My sleeps within his arms have been as sweet,
My dreams as harmless, my content as full,
As though the best appliances of plenty
Crowned to the height our bride-bed.

No assault

Of gifts, of courtship,—sense of poverty

Beside him,—comforts, honours, when apart,—
Can inveigle off my heart, or e'en corrupt
A single thought to injure *him*, whose absence
Would cloud my soul, e'en in the courts of heaven.

LAOTSEN.

He set himself
To lose his noblest part, discarding you.

LILIN.

Discard me? Never!

LAOTSEN.

Fool! Thou art my purchase,
Destined to share my nuptial bed.

LILIN.

Dread, sir!
Beseech you, as an humble thing look on me,
Who millions of degrees is placed beneath you.
Didst challenge full submission, still my heart,
Like spell-bound spirit, near the embalmed dust
It can no more inanimate, would wander
With him, *my only husband*.

LAOTSEN.

Where may that be?

LILIN.

Where? Were I lost to him, I dread to think.

(She breaks off, and then with deeper feeling.)

What anxious visions rise!

Methinks I see him,
Uncheered of earthly voice, and destitute

Of all good comforts else.
 The beating blast fulfils its dire commission
 Upon his unhoused head.
 I hear a sob of agony amid
 The moaning winds! I hear him call on Lilin!

LAOTSEN.

This is mere fantasy, which works within
 Strong as the truth.

Compose thyself, fair creature!

LILIN.

Conceive, my lord, the misery of those
 Who, while the night-blast rock their walls, all wrapped
 In robes of ermine, by their blazing hearth
 And splendid board, unto the pelting storm
 Lend shrinking ears, for, ah! the head to them
 Most dear lies shelterless; and from the viands
 They turn at thought of how the wretch sinks famishing.

LAOTSEN.

That he thou harp'st on, should, when thou art exalted,
 Fall into such extremity, follows not.

LILIN.

It does.—

He would grow oblivious of his state,
 Earth, heaven, his God! and as the forest maddens,
 When tempests blacken o'er it, so the storm
 Within, will from his senses wrench away
 Their plain intelligence, and he'll stand scathed,
 While all the winds of heaven strew winter on him,
 Till he blanch white with famine.

LAOTSEN.

What a heart?

A true and honest human heart? That's given,

As this world goes, to break . . . But not by *me* !
What ho, there !

Enter Attendant.

Prithee, wench, instruct us where
To find this party : I would speak with him.

LILIN.

You mean the youth no harm ?

LAOTSEN.

None, none, by Heaven !

LILIN (*aside*).

The event has justified my hopes ; and Kautsu
Will approve this daring step when . . . : blessèd chance !
(*To Attendant.*)

Wilt please you walk aside ; I will direct you.

(LILIN remains apart with Attendant.)

LAOTSEN comes forward.

LAOTSEN.

What wild emotions fight within ! Must I
My paid-for bride resign ?

I would I had not

Seen her.

Exit Attendant.

(*To LILIN.*) Come hither. How art called ?

Do you hear me ?

(LILIN advances forward.)

Before this husband made o'er all his rights,
You must have lost your hold on his affections.

LILIN.

'T was piety! not base lucre.

Nought could part us,
Though still he tugs against the streams of fortune
In vain, but the harsh avarice of his father.

LAOTSEN (*apart*).

Oh, sweet obedience! Type of reverence
We owe the gods, that *I* had such a son!

(*Aloud.*)

Who is his father?

LILIN.

He who brought me hither.

LAOTSEN.

What, Siefong?

(*Aside.*) I must sift the truth of this.

Steps!

(*Aloud.*)

Through that door retire, and clear your eyesight,
That you may see your fortune, which is greater
Than you can judge on the sudden.

LILIN.

In my heart

I'll seek the truer office of mine eyes,
Where *he* is limn'd to the life, who is the mirror
Where I shall see my fortune.

LAOTSEN.

Get you in!

[*Exit* LILIN.]

Enter Attendant and KAUTSU guarded.

Ha! art thou caught, young man?

Such face, methinks,

I have been acquainted with.

Is't real? Kautsu?

KAUTSU.

The Envoy? Ruin! I'm doomed!

But since the light

Of love is darkened, let my sun of life

Be eclipsed for ever . . . I care not.

ATTENDANT (*to* LAOTSEN).

Near the spot

She pointed out I encountered him; but only

Upon compulsion would he come,

LAOTSEN.

The heavens,

To bring forth his discovery so strangely!

(*To Attendant.*)

Leave him with me; but rest ye within hail.

[*Exeunt Attendant and Guard.*]

(*To KAUTSU.*)

I found your house as bare as is your heart

Of loyalty. What made you fly?

(*A pause.*)

Thou wast

Bid learn the vindicator of this League.

(*After another pause.*)

Thou know'st, yet closed thy mouth!

Conniv'st at treason,

Blood-guiltiness, and mak'st thyself accomplice

In crimes beyond redemption, and wilt speak not.

(*Another pause.*)

This hired slayer produce, thou art pardoned fully.
Out with the truth—the *whole* truth.

(*Another pause.*)

What? wilt not

Unfold thee yet?

(*Another pause.*)

So whips shall wring confession.

KAUTSU.

My silence will approve a higher truth
Than aught that whips can strain, though they wind out
My life. I am no dastard.

Bring the scourge.

LAOTSEN.

You shall have *agonies*!

(*LAOTSEN goes to the door, which he throws open, then
in a loud voice.*)

THE TORTURER!

(*Leads LILIN forward.*)

LILIN.

Kautsu!

KAUTSU.

Off minion! Not content to quit me,
But thou must train me to my ruin!

LAOTSEN.

You are rude,

Nor know to whom you speak.

KAUTSU.

Alas! I think so.

She was once free from spot as the blue face
Of heaven without a flaw in 't. Lilin! Lilin!

LAOTSEN.

Touch not those twins of ivory, nor forget
Due reverence.

KAUTSU.

I appeal unto the Viceroy.

LAOTSEN.

The Viceroy is now in me ; and I advise you,
Name his vowed slayer.

(*After a pause.*) Well, yield freely up
This bounty of kind Nature, thou art absolved,
Though his Highness fall to-morrow !

KAUTSU (*indignantly*).

Make me pander

To my own wife ?

Though than the slave she is
I hate her worse, thou canst not slave our souls.

LAOTSEN.

This purpose then, or, mark me, I will tear thee,
But I will know the murderer, joint by joint.

LILIN (*kneeling to LAOTSEN*).

Sir, lower in my heart than on my knees,
I offer up my suit ; you will your anger
Refrain from our estate. The sunbeam pity
Let it shine out ; and, to adorn your age,
Purchase our blessings, since the poor, their prayers
Are never beaten back.

LAOTSEN (*softened*).

Beshrew the girl,

To melt me thus !

LILIN (*rising*).

I knew, you would be gentle.

(*To KAUTSU.*)

If you know aught of the matter, lay all open,
And you 'll be pardoned straight.

KAUTSU (*not regarding her*).

(*To LAOTSEN.*)

Whoe'er thou art

Venturest such strange abuse.

LAOTSEN (*interrupting*).

Though we allowed

This bloody secret, lest you bar that greatness,
Her matchless form doth challenge—

Ho! A guard!

(*Enter GUARD.*)

(*LAOTSEN motions to KAUTSU who is arrested.*)

LILIN (*kneeling to KAUTSU*).

Dear Kautsu, look upon me!

By the faith,

That I have borne you in our loneliness,
By woman's love, that masters death, but speak!
I fear I have betrayed you, and your blood
Sits heavy on my soul.

Divulge this practice,

The Mandarin is kind, and will forgive you,

KAUTSU (*indignantly*).

Go from me grave of honour! go thou foul one!
Thou glory of thy sin! go thou despised one!
And where there is no virtue, trust, nor truth,
Where nuptial love and honour were ne'er heard of,

Go thither, child of blood ! I throw thee from me !
And may my tortures, great as is thy falsehood,
Catch thee ! and turn to serpents, shames, and curses !

(*LILIN falls senseless.*)

LAOTSEN.

The madman has destroyed her.

Bear him hence !—

And send the ladies of the chamber hither.

(*Exit KAUTSU in custody.*)

LAOTSEN (*raising LILIN on his knee*).

A sweeter grief than this I never looked on !
Lo ! where a tear steals from her, cut in marble.
Just so her monument,
Choicest of beautiful forms inanimate,
Might put on life !

(*Enter female Attendants.*)

LAOTSEN.

(*Placing LILIN in the arms of Attendants.*)

Bear her with reverence !

(*The scene closes.*)

END OF ACT FOURTH.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A splendid Apartment in the Vice-regal Palace.

*Magnificent dais, ottomans, &c. Grand assemblage of
Mandarins and Ladies.*

Enter CHU (in custody) and FANSU.

FANSU (*to CHU*).

Plead that your boast was practice,
And your grandsire
Will blind his eyes.

CHU.

I've scanned this company o'er,
And what?

(Turning to, and addressing the assembly.)

You all stand gazing after our new comet,
In awe and admiration, I dare say.

FANSU.

And do not you, Chu?

CHU.

I admire what's inward!
And all must grant that *there*, though he storm at it,
Chu takes the right hand file.

FANSU.

But *did* you threaten
To smite the governor?

CHU.

He'd gladly silence
Such as see near and far; by nature's patent,
Statesmen; but did he judge we were as wise
As men repute! . . . we *are* but flesh and blood!

(*Pauses with an air of reflection.*)

Still, *being Chu*, I must confess there is
Another matter in 't.

FANSU.

Laotsen heard you . . .

CHU (*breaking in with an outburst*).

He heard? Fine laws! Witness! Accuser! Judge!
Most equitable laws! that men—that Chu,
Of note, in spite of all the sort of you,
Who, were it likely he could live obscured,
Had nobly found his safety by retiring
Into himself, should lose his dearest blood,
And sweetest breath, immortal, through base envy!
But let that pass. *What* heard he?

FANSU.

Silly threat
Of thine, to murder.

CHU.

Honour is like woman—
Follows who fly it! and, like camomile,
The more 't is trodden, mounts. I shake no jot,
Were he ten thousand Viceroy.

So record it!

And let the land ring with my name and purpose.
Rate me not 'mongst those nobodies that have
No mark nor notoriety.

FANSU.

The Viceroy!
He is your grandsire. You will kneel to *him*?

CHU (*indignantly*).

I become short by the knees? Oh! low thought, mother!
Chu reflects honour, not resorts to any
Reservoir (reservoir is a word to admire)
Reservoir of merit in a predecessor.
I am as great *within my thoughts*, as though
The state he prides him on adorned my person.
Sure I know things.

Your tire is exquisite,

Mother.

My *tuft*—does it show?—wave gracefully?

FANSU.

Now, God-a-mercy, Chu!—do mind your *head*!

(*Flourish of trumpets.*)

*Enter LAOTSEN, adorned in great state, attended by
SIEFONG and Guard.*

LAOTSEN (*with dignity*).

Welcome, my early friends! Ye sons and daughters
Of Nankin, welcome all!

There have been rumours

Of dangers, and I know not what. We oppose
Ourselves against such giddy loose alarms,
That float upon a wild and violent sea,
Hither and thither.

To the bastinado,
We sentence whosoever shall be proved
Guilty of smoking opium in this city!
(*Sensation.*)

(*LAOTSEN comes forward with SIEFONG.*)
Siefong, a word with you.

A thing too bright,
If ever beauty had a soul, for earth,
You did present me.

SIEFONG (*chuckling*).
Ha! he! he! Dost like her?

LAOTSEN.
I understand she was not thine to barter.

SIEFONG.
By Tien! Who told you *that*?

LAOTSEN.
Herself.
The legal
Owner's thy son, in custody for treason.

SIEFONG (*aside*).
Treason! I'm prompted.
(*Aloud.*) To avert worse life,
I sold her. Though she thinks the lad my son,
I bought him in his infancy. No bargain!
Linked with the *Pe-lien League*, I hear he stands
In danger.

LAOTSEN (*aside*).

Ha! the Opium League! Reminded!

(*Aloud.*)

How came *you* by the roll of the free members.

SIEFONG (*confused*).

Roll? Eh? What? Devils luck! How happened it?

I lost my list, do you query?

LAOTSEN.

How you *got* it

I wish to know? My daughter, Fansu, tells me . . .

SIEFONG.

Oh, ho! I see!

(*Aside.*) I gave her the wrong paper.

(*Aloud.*) That scroll? I lit upon 't in Kautsu's house.

LAOTSEN (*aside*).

In Kautsu's house?

(*Aloud.*) All the conspirators

Except the vindicator I have secured,

Can you divine who *is* that wretch?

SIEFONG (*embarrassed*).

Troth, cared I

To guess, I should say, Kautsu.

'T would not start him,

Murder. A precious rascal, take my word for it.

LAOTSEN (*aside*).

No middle course were safe.

(*LAOTSEN ascends the throne.*)

(*To Officer.*) Guard here that youth

Imprisoned yesterday on charge of treason.

[*Exit Officer.*]

CHU (*to SIEFONG*).

What says the world, touching my new addition
Of fame, in this affair? *The town talk am I?*
My courage magnified? Do not the fools
Envy?

SIEFONG.

Vain thing, the danger!

CHU.

Teach no more!
Would danger crossed me once! 't would find a lion!

SIEFONG (*with a sneer*).

Of the dwarf species.

CHU (*heroically*).

Think you 't is his size,
That makes the royal beast the forest's terror?

SIEFONG (*shrugging his shoulders*).

The devil help you!

CHU (*with ineffable contempt*).

Pray for yourself. I scorn
Your prayers.

Enter KAUTSU (guarded).

KAUTSU.

The fox on the seat of justice?

Then good-night
To my redress!

LAOTSEN.

Why thou irreverend knave!
Whom callest thou fox?

KAUTSU.

Whom? There was once a shepherd,
Mighty in stores of cattle, had a neighbour
Exceeding poor, yet rich, for that he owned
A little lamb, which had grown up with him.
Thou art that wealthy shepherd, and that fox
Of whom I seek my lamb!

LAOTSEN.

Then rend the veil
Shrouds Hysyeh's slayer, and who, you affirmed,
Aims likewise at *my* death.

Here is one confesses
He is the miscreant.

(CHU assumes a proud attitude.)

KAUTSU (*looking around, rushes past CHU to SIEFONG*).

(To SIEFONG.) For this brave deed,
Sublime in penitence, my father, I . . .

SIEFONG (*gruffly*).

I do disclaim you.

KAUTSU.

Weak of me to think it!

LAOTSEN (*to KAUTSU*).

Unfold the wretch whom justice searches out.

(KAUTSU looks round the circle, fixes his eyes on SIEFONG,
and trembles.)

KAUTSU.

I have no tongue to speak it. *Even now!*

(SIEFONG approaches him, and frowns.)

This deed were shocking to all nature !

LAOTSEN.

Own you

Writing these lines ? (*Shows a paper.*)

You do. Who is the assassin

'Gainst whom you warn me ?

Art thyself this villain ?

So Siefong more than hinted.

Look'st thou pale ?

KAUTSU (*in a deep voice*).

Siefong, did HE say that ?

LAOTSEN.

As much.

KAUTSU (*vehemently*).

Then slay me !

'*T is just !*

LAOTSEN.

What should I think ?

By all that's holy !

You name the wretch, or perish in his stead.

(*Pauses, and then solemnly.*)

My oath is up in heaven !

My friends, I'll fetch

The lady destined for our bride.

(*Aside.*) Her presence,—

It seems my only chance,—may induce confession.

[*Exit* LAOTSEN.]

(CHU approaches and fronts KAUTSU : a pause. KAUTSU turns away.)

CHU.

I've thus long paused in wonder, yet stand fair!

SIEFONG. (*with affected admiration*).

Room for a passion!

CHU (*to KAUTSU*).

I would peruse thee further;

Thee, who would rob me of so great renown,
As makes a moiety of this action.

KAUTSU.

Pish!

CHU (*proudly*).

Chu, sir, has collusion with himself alone!

SIEFONG.

Mere craving after wonder!

CHU.

Ignorance!

Ignorance! (*Moves apart.*)

KAUTSU (*perceiving the essence-box in the hands of SIEFONG*).

(*Apart.*) That box! Gods!

(*To SIEFONG.*) Didst not to thy use,

As an equivalent, apply the price
Which

SIEFONG (*aside to KAUTSU*).

But one thousand, which last night, by fortune
Exorcised, vanished. Now I would sup as well

As dine. So on apt occasion, ere our gala
Closes, I mean Laotsen to inhale
This scent.

KAUTSU.

I do conjure

SIEFONG.

Quite safe!

Most here,
Knew they my hands in work, would but cry, hem!
And look aside

(Sneeringly.) The way men lie like truth.

To obtain free scope, I now remove the guard.

(Exit SIEFONG, with Guard.)

(KAUTSU stands horror struck.)

FANSU *(to KAUTSU)*.

Young man, there's Chu. Just say he is not guilty!

CHU.

Stoop not to any.

Oh, thou honoured parent,
To have borne the martyr Chu!

FANSU.

What ails the frantic?

HU.

Confucius' birth shall be no more a landmark :
But men shall reckon from Chu's martyrdom.
A critical day! A day of note! The phrase
Will run, as I was born, or married, or
What not, some fortnight ere the day of Chu!
And yet I am, as you are, mother . . . *Mortal!*

FANSU.

Thou art the frowning'st little thing in China,
When thou art minded.

(Flourish of trumpets.)

HERALD *(without)*.

Hail to the Viceroy's bride !

Re-enter LAOTSEN with LILIN, splendidly attired, followed by a troop of maidens, bearing her train.

LAOTSEN *(taking her by the hand)*.

Decked like thyself, what tire can suit that brow,
If not a diadem ? Albeit it shines
So exquisitely fair, all ornament
Takes from its lustre.

LILIN *(kneels)*.

Why array my limbs
In gay attire not fitting me ? This gilding
Can never clear me of a debt that's due
But to *one* man I love.

I am come forth,
Wherefore I know not.

LAOTSEN.

Sweet, to share my honours.
Though I cannot make thy welcome rich enough,
With all the wealth of words. May this

LILIN.

Forbear !

That Kautsu were but here !

LAOTSEN.

What could he do?

(KAUTSU rushes and interposes his person between
LAOTSEN and LILIN.)

KAUTSU.

This could he do, base Viceroy.

LILIN (*embracing him*).

My true comfort!

Armed angel! Shield me from all wrong!

KAUTSU (*taking her hand*).

'Tis mine!

Souls sink in 't and are lost!

LAOTSEN (*to KAUTSU*).

Why, thou vile rebel!

Is 't not enough that thou refrain'st to say
Who plots our death, but thou must call the image
Of his Celestial Highness base? The gods
Permit not that you live.

LILIN.

Great lord august!

The gods had rather witness deeds of pity,
Which they account as incense.

Spare my husband,

Whose crime is love.

CHU (*to FANSU*).

A tender toy enough!

By moon and lamp light we have met erewhiles;
I have kissed her or so.

LAOTSEN (*to LILIN*).

Thou art deceived. That man
Cares not for you.

LILIN (*bowing*).

Respect to your great place!
Or I'd tell thee what a slanderer thou art.

LAOTSEN.

I'll give thee instant proof.
(*To KAUTSU.*) Take back this fair,
Dowered and unsullied.

(*KAUTSU kneels.*)

LAOTSEN.

Kautsu, hear me out.
She's thine conditionally, that you show
The assassin, where he stands.

KAUTSU.

Oh, horrible!

LILIN.

Canst hesitate? *One word*, we are both so happy!

LAOTSEN.

You see, I slandered not.
(*To KAUTSU.*) The rapid minute
Of choice slides from your grasp.

KAUTSU.

Cold horror numbs me!

(*Aside.*)

To revolt gods and men!

FANSU (*approaching KAUTSU*).

Please certify,

Chu's accusation of himself is but

An escapade of youth.

Young man, speak for him !

KAUTSU.

Save in his fantasy ; from blood Chu's free,

Whoe'er be guilty.

CHU (*indignantly*.)

Not so, envious earthling !

LAOTSEN.

Chu, cease these dreams ; you are free and pardoned.

CHU (*in accents of disdainful anger*).

Pardoned !

Do you think to do it with impunity ?

To pardon Chu ? Beware !

(*Grandly*.) *The end is not !*

[*Exit CHU indignantly.*

LAOTSEN (*looking after him*).

His wits are tainted, cracked with overweening.

FANSU (*looking after CHU*).

The enthusiastic youth !

(*Significantly to KAUTSU*.)

Thy heart shall dance

For this.

(*She retires up the stage.*)

LAOTSEN.

He palters. We will no longer ravel
Time. Prove thy fealty.

(After a pause.)

But discover, Lilin,
Is thine, else instant death !

KAUTSU *(after a pause, calmly)*.

DEATH !

LAOTSEN *(to Officer)*.

Fetch the Headsman !

[Officer bows, and exit.

(LAOTSEN ascends the throne.)

LILIN.

Nay, nay, his words concert not with his mind.
He 'll live ! He chooses Lilin !

KAUTSU *(reproachfully)*.

You forsook me !

LILIN.

Oh ! this close secret, and thy stubborn silence
Crossed my poor aims, or else—

There, you 'll reveal him.

(Loudly to LAOTSEN.)

Kautsu relents !

KAUTSU.

Wouldst have me entertain
My life, by means will fetter me till death,
God's frown my soul searing for ever after ?

LILIN (*tenderly*).

I would not have thee other than thou art.

KAUTSU (*firmly*).

Death's minister, then, must cancel the sweet bond
Which made us one.

LILIN (*with emotion*).

Where'er thou art I'll be,
Alive or dead. Will lie down on the block
With thee, as on our couch. The headsman's axe,
That lulls us to that sleep from which none wake,
Shall find us circled in each other's arms.

(*Throws herself into his arms.*)

LAOTSEN (*rising on his throne*).

Bright flower of Nankin! Fairest of thy sex,
Which air did ever kiss! I pray thee, listen.
Here by my side shall Lilin sit, the city
Casting its lavish homage at her feet.
Reach me that arrowy hand, that shall be mine!
Lilin, my bride, ascend thy throne!

(*FANSU steps forward, and stands at the foot of the throne.*)

FANSU (*in a determined voice*).

She must not!

LAOTSEN.

What's that?

FANSU.

She must not take your hand.

Right, law,

Nature forbids it; for thou canst not marry
The wife of thine own son!

LAOTSEN.

My son ! art mad ?

FANSU.

Thy second choice in wedlock died in travail.

LAOTSEN.

Thou crackest my heart anew ;

And of her burthen

Heaven likewise made a star.

FANSU.

'T was given out so.

LAOTSEN.

Given out ? I saw the corpse, and buried it.

FANSU.

The still-born babe of our slave, Lotsa, 't was
No son of yours, or Han, you buried.

Youen

Told me, Han's offspring would stand between
Chu and his fortunes, and it pierced me through,
And I, my child well-loving, yielded to him,
We should pretend to you the infant's death.

LAOTSEN (*greatly excited*).

Stop there a little. Youen is no witness
To summon. Give me living evidence !
Proofs to set doubts asleep.

Who knew of this ?

FANSU.

Siao first received the babe, and Lotsa
Knew well whose child you did inearth.

Besides,

There's Siefong, who . . .

LAOTSEN (*breaking in breathlessly*).
(*Loudly*.) Ho Siefong !

ATTENDANT.

He is with
The guard in the ante-room, my lord.

LAOTSEN (*loudly*).

Ho, Siefong !

Wherefore not fetch him ?

[*Exit Attendant.*

When you see me stand
The mockery of some earthquake !

(*More violently.*) Siefong, there !

The heavens are trembling.

(*Most loudly.*) Siefong !

Re-enter SIEFONG.

SIEFONG.

Calls my lord ?

LAOTSEN (*in breathless agitation*).

Tell me about this matter, if thou canst,
That thus hath made me weep ?

FANSU.

Didst thou not purchase,
On the morning of Han's death, a babe of Youen ?

SIEFONG (*with a kind of scornful accent*).

Him yonder. I the more fool for it.

LILIN (*apart*).

Kautsu,

Hark there !

KAUTSU (*apart, exultingly*).
No murderer's son am I!

SIEFONG (*with a shrug*).

I marvel

What *that* concerns Laotsen.

[*Exit SIEFONG, whistling.*]

LAOTSEN.

Oh! I turn
Into a child again, and vainly struggle
With an o'erruling mercy.

Where . . . where breathes
My other life? that I may, big with passion,
Down on my knees to thank the holy gods.

KAUTSU.

In sentencing Kautsu you have doomed your son.

LAOTSEN (*rising*).

Well, I'll not baulk the play of my brave dream.
But act it out.

(*Staggers down the steps of the throne.*)

To trial bright shape!

If thou,

As this wild music in my heart persuades,
Art son of mine, in my bosom I shall find thee.

(*Pauses on the lowest step, and then gaspingly.*)

It cannot be!

(*Falls in the arms of KAUTSU who had moved to the front of the throne.*)

LAOTSEN (*with a scream of exulting pathos*).

Right! Right! I know thou art!

KAUTSU (*kneeling*).

Father!

LAOTSEN.

My tears will flow. Why, what a child
Am I to have a child! On the other hand,
To fly out into mirth were wrong. I'd talk
A thousand things to thee, my strength!

Fresh blood!

Let me gaze on. I am not mortal, sure!

I am not mortal. Mine own boy! . .

At last!

There! Well! I have grown a wondrous happy man,
And have a world within me.

Take my blessing!

FANSU (*timidly*).

May I hope I am forgiven?—Youen's fault!

LAOTSEN (*to FANSU*).

You've bought your pardon, for this precious act
Makes your past 'haviour lovely.

(*Aside.*) Ha! my hopes

Play false with me, when thinking on an oath
Is up in heaven.

To die? My son to die?

(*LAOTSEN throws himself upon a couch in agitation, and covers his face with his hands, trembling.*)

KAUTSU (*approaching*).

How wrapt ! I will denounce the vindicator !

(*To LAOTSEN.*)

I'd speak a word in private.

LAOTSEN (*lost and absent*).

As you will.

(*LAOTSEN and KAUTSU confer together.*)

FANSU.

Oh ! See where Chu comes frowning.—Bless us all !

Re-enter CHU.

CHU.

Whatever you may think, I've thought and thought,
And thought upon it.

Since the throne is vacant,
I will ascend my state ! *fulfil my mission !*

(*CHU with slow and majestic steps, ascends the throne, and
seats himself.*)

'T was only opportunity I lacked,
To erect myself above the strain of flesh,
Not mind nor merit ; *both* in me abound.

FANSU.

You've *such* a self-opinion ! Prithee Chu,
Let not ambition carry you away
To your own ruin.

CHU.

Forego my power to do
Things unexpected ?

Mother, take your place,
And let our warlike music sound !

*Re-enter SIEFONG.*SIEFONG (*not perceiving LAOTSEN*).

Laotsen

Gone! Chu enthroned ?

(*Re-enter OFFICER with the HEADSMAN, who advances
with uplifted axe to the throne, and addresses CHU.*)

CHU (*aside*).

I did never appear till now.

I've the best presence? It was in me ever.

(*Aloud.*)

That old grey ruffian is your prisoner.

(*Motions to SIEFONG.*)(*The Headsman seizes SIEFONG.*)

SIEFONG.

Whirlwinds of rage!

You were not sent for me.

* S' blood! I am not the party.

FANSU (*to Headsman*).

Right, I assure you.

SIEFONG.

That woman's tongue be blistered!

All the devils!

FANSU.

Oh, Chu! Had you seen him kneeling, you'd have died!

CHU.

No trivial motive speeds a shooting star;
When I die, mother! *When I die!*

(SIEFONG *whistles.*)

FANSU.

There's a strain!

SIEFONG.

'T is to the purpose, which thy talk was never.
I would my wrath were poison!

(*He whistles.*)

LAOTSEN (*looking up, aroused*).

What may this mean?

Release him.

(SIEFONG *is released.*)

(*Perceiving CHU.*) *Ha! Chu!*

CHU (*affectedly*).

How like you my aspect?

Enamoured of my presence?

LAOTSEN.

Is there, Siefong,

No gay device?

SIEFONG.

He points me to my purpose!

FANSU.

The sports to you were tiresome.

LAOTSEN.

Fansu, No !

FANSU.

A pillow for his head . .

Your fan !

LAOTSEN.

The dance !

Let not my faintness interrupt the mirth.

What sweet peace feel I !

Now then, revels ! music !

(To SIEFONG).

Go for your masks to entertain the time.

[Exit SIEFONG.

CHU (*in a tone of command*).

Who are about us ? Masquers, mirth, and music !

KAUTSU (*to LAOTSEN*).

Now, sir, be speedy ! Let me take your place.

You shall have proof of all I have just averred.

(LAOTSEN rises, and KAUTSU reclines in his place on the ottoman.)

Enter dancers. A short dance, &c., during which LAOTSEN, FANSU, LILIN, &c., are intercepted from view.

(*The dancers disperse. KAUTSU discovered still lying on the ottoman, concealed down to the breast by the fan he holds. The flags and banners hide the throne from the audience.*)

Re-enter SIEFONG.

(SIEFONG approaches the couch).

SIEFONG.

How still he lies ! and my proceeding aids,
By sleep.

(Produces scent-box.)

Fine engine steal away his soul !

*(SIEFONG hangs over the couch with the essence-box :
The fan falls : The recumbent figure starts up,
and seizes the box from the hand of SIEFONG.)*

KAUTSU.

Poisoner !

SIEFONG.

Gods ! Kautsu !

*(KAUTSU fells SIEFONG, and, with his foot upon his
breast, holds aloft the essence-box.)*

KAUTSU.

Here behold the proof !

Father ! the vindicator waits your sentence !

*(The men with banners move on either side, and dis-
cover LAOTSEN seated on the throne—LILIN on the
right—FANSU on the left.)*

(CHU near with the Headsman's axe.)

KAUTSU.

By *this* Great Hyesyehu lost his life, and *thus*
Laotsen was to perish !

CHU.

Miscreant ! Villain !

(CHU *approaches* SIEFONG *with the axe upraised.*)

This was I born for ! Citizens of Nankin !
Publish it,—tell it of me, that I, Chu,
Thus !

(CHU *raises the axe to strike off the head of* SIEFONG.)

LAOTSEN (*in a commanding voice*).

HOLD !

(KAUTSU *arrests the arm of* CHU.)

LAOTSEN.

I pardon him ! Let him go free.

SIEFONG (*rising*).

Laotsen, sooner slay me ! Life is hell !

LAOTSEN.

Thou art pardoned, wretch ! Begone, and mend thy life.

SIEFONG.

Laotsen ! Laotsen !

LAOTSEN.

Thou art forgiven ! Hence !

[*Exit SIEFONG.*]

KAUTSU (*advances to the throne, and kneels*).

How dost thou fare ?

LAOTSEN.

All was foretold by Bonzes,

Dark until time, best oracle of truth !

Brings *thee* to save. Their sense, obscurely veiled,
Flashes at length.

What spirit ? Is it Lilin ?

LILIN.

Oh, happiness ! Kautsu, you have a father's love.

LAOTSEN.

Ye are both mine own indeed !—Fansu, my blessing !

(*Turns to CHU*)

Chu, I 've bethought me, I 'll ship thee to Peking.

Your monomania will delight his Highness.

FANSU (*with reverential air*).

In some high office doubtless ?

LAOTSEN.

High ? THE HIGHEST !

But with this caution, none in China know it,

Except himself.

CHU.

No living wight shall know it.

LAOTSEN.

'T is such a droll !

(To KAUTSU *tenderly*.) My son !

Extremity

Of joys ! Let it not ravish life from me

Too soon, Heaven, I beseech you !

(The curtain falls.)

END OF SELF-GLORIFICATION.

REBECCA AND HER DAUGHTERS.

A COMEDY FOR THE TIMES.

In Five Acts.

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

TO

THE AUTHOR OF "THE CHIMES."

Characters.

SIR DAVID NINNYHAM.

SQUIRE COURTALL.

ROLAND AP GRIFFITH.

PADDY.*

FARMER AP REECE.

BURGESSSES.

REBECCAITES.

LADY NINNYHAM.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

ANNETTE.

REBECCA.

~~~~~

SCENE . . . . . *Wales.*

\* Much of PADDY'S Hybernicism is a repetition from "PERE LA CHAISE, OR THE CONFESSOR, A TALE OF THE TIMES, in 3 vols., edited by G. S., author of 'IRELAND,' 'CHURCH RATES,' the 'Introduction to the Church of England Quarterly Review,' and subsequent articles." Published by Whittaker & Co.

# REBECCA AND HER DAUGHTERS.



## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

*A parlour in Squire Griffith's villa.*

*Enter PADDY and ANNETTE.*

ANNETTE.

Well I 'm sure ! and how long hast set eyes on 'Becca ?

PADDY.

'T was ever since I came into Wales, and longer too, faith.

ANNETTE.

Only fancy, she and her daughters were to pay us a visit in master's absence. Mistress and me have but lives as other women have. Fie on Squire Griffith to leave us a top o' the mountains o' the dark nights, and none in the lonely old house besides, but the bitch and Towser, and Sam, and the new footboy, and cook, and housemaid !

Mistress is but a woman as another woman is ; and to repudiate her day by day, and night after night.

By-the-by Paddy, what 's the colour of 'Becca's eyes?

PADDY.

They 're a sort of pepper and salt, like master's, my honey.

ANNETTE.

Master's ! Well I 'm sure !

PADDY (*quickly*).

Pantaloons.

Upon my shoul ! a very gentlemanly colour.

ANNETTE.

What 's her age ? Can she speak English ?  
Is she tall ?

PADDY.

As noble a crathur of a patriot as she had been born in Tipperary, and stands five feet ten in her stockings, with as portly a step as ever trod on a floor ; but we 'll lave her alone for I 've rason to repent I have been too outspoken, but what 's the good now ? I should have repented before the sin was committed.

ANNETTE.

By all means repent ; but your heart 's up in your mouth ere you have done your penance.

PADDY.

Those words are a purgation to me, Annette. Mark you not desperation in my face, and death marching in my very countenance ? When next this unruly member is on the tip of betraying me, plase fetch my ears a box so swinging that they broil like a rasher on the coals.

ANNETTE.

A sauce box, Paddy.

(*A clock strikes.*)

PADDY (*speaking to himself*).

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight; and 't is nine miles, and three . . twelve miles—so!

ANNETTE (*listening*).

Oh, crimine! Now he 'll strip this matter out of his lips, as cook a pudding out of the cloth.

PADDY (*speaking to himself*).

I must be at the gate of Penallen before midnight, and unless I take a bit of a circuit, I 'll never come straight.

ANNETTE (*aside*).

Well I 'm sure!

PADDY (*speaking to himself*).

What 's the odds his honour slapes at home?

ANNETTE (*seizing Paddy by the ear*).

That 's what mistress and me would be glad to learn. What 's the odds something very wicked does not turn out, from Squire Griffith's everlasting riotings and revelings?

PADDY.

Och, by St. Patrick!

Mistress Annette, you have been after taking advantage of my little infirmity.

ANNETTE.

Answer me, sir. Does the squire purpose returning to the villa to-night?

PADDY.

I can tell of an urgent business will most probably employ him elsewhere, my honey.

ANNETTE (*demurely*).

Mrs. Griffith, poor dear gentlewoman, would prefer Master Roland Griffith despatching that urgent business at home, instead of at Ninnyham Hall, Paddy. It makes her spoil one of the best faces in South Wales with crying at the squire's incontinence.

PADDY.

Incontinence is another guess sort of case. Saint Mary defend us!

ANNETTE.

Oh Paddy, a little time goes a' great way in such like business, and when once faithless people take to lying out of nights, people's wives feel uneasy.

PADDY.

But the squire will not be after lying out, when its on the hills he's standing, my darling.

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure! I smell it! Paddy, will you grant me one little favour?

PADDY.

Faith! will I, Annette, for though it may not be in my power to do it, it can never be in my heart to decline it.

ANNETTE.

It has been reported in the neighbourhood, that 'Becca is a veritable woman. Tell me the truth of it.

PADDY.

Is it a jury of matrons you take me for, honey?

ANNETTE.

But it concerns my mistress, since——

PADDY (*stifling a laugh*).

Och! you may say that—I cannot help my laugh anyhow! . . I know nobody it concerns more than it does your lady; but she might larn the secret mighty aisy, I reckon.

ANNETTE.

How, Paddy?

PADDY.

Sure, her husband can tell it her, if she'll only ask him the question one of these fine nights.

ANNETTE.

I understand your inuendo, Paddy. 'Becca *is* a woman. Oh, how shocked will Mrs. Griffith be!

PADDY (*stifling a laugh*).

Egad! The laugh will come upon my mouth, in spite of me. And if that be 'Becca's sex, my darling, may be its yourself would not be shocked in the like predicament.

ANNETTE.

I would not bear it, Paddy. It's a shame for the squire to scour the hills after Rebecca; she bears a bad character.

PADDY.

The devil a bit does the squire care for that same, my honey. Arrah, hers is the character to his mind, which he takes to all as naturally as if it were ordained in Heaven.

ANNETTE.

What's orthodoxy *there*, is for marriages, Paddy, and Master demeans himself to follow after any other doxy.

PADDY.

You should not spake ignominies of the squire. When his father fell from his horse,—may the Saints see to his soul!—there was not a dry eye for miles about, as you know very well.

ANNETTE.

Ay, everybody said, that a stranger to this part of the country, like Squire Courtall, had never been our M.P. if master's father had recovered.

PADDY.

Devil doubt it, my honey! The late squire's seat was safe all the days of his life; let the Englishman Courtall have accumulated ever such monster estates, and worships, and honours; but if he had 'em all for nothing he would scarce make his money of them.

ANNETTE.

Out on the antiquated exquisite! Pity Time has not gifted his bald head with something better than a dandy wig.

PADDY.

Arrah, now, he does not think small beer of himself, Squire Courtall: He gives out he is but turned of five-and-thirty.

ANNETTE (*with a laugh*).

Or scarce so much, if he might have his will. He takes counsel with the secrets of art, Paddy, to make himself youthful.

PADDY.

By the Saints ! It is afraid of dying he is, I guess.

ANNETTE.

He *dyes* too fast already. His whiskers were whiter, I warrant, ten years ago. He thinks that no lady can resist his temptations, or he never would court them as he does. There's Lady Ninnyham. She *may* be his relation, but I never heard say what relation. Why, Paddy, you are not leaving ?

PADDY.

Fair dreams and apparitions to you and missis ! but me and my master, plase St. Peter, will show ourselves at breakfast.

ANNETTE.

Paddy, where's the haste now ?

PADDY.

The haste ! Holy Saints be about us ! If 'Becca . . . Be aisy, Paddy, and kape your own secrets, for what's my master's is mine, while I've the honour to sarve him. Where's the haste now ?

[*Exit* PADDY.]

ANNETTE (*looking after him*).

Well, I'm sure ! (*After a pause.*) As I hope to be saved—and that's a bold word for a lady's maid—if Squire Griffith has not an appointment at the gate of Pennallen this night with Madam 'Becca, and has ordered Paddy there for the sake of decorum ! Yes, yes : I'll spoil their holiday !

*Enter* MRS. GRIFFITH.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Whither is Paddy bound in such haste ?



ANNETTE.

Surely to Ninnyham Hall, as usual, ma'am.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Did you learn at what time I might expect his master? I feel overworn, child, and will lie down in hopes of a troubled slumber.

ANNETTE.

You can take your repose, ma'am, to your heart's content, for, by what I hear, the squire is in for all night, and you are not likely to be disturbed before the hour of breakfast.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Disturbed! Is it so? No health can stand these everlasting revels of Ap Griffith. Was Paddy ordered to attend his master? You change colour. In your eyes—in the looks of all I speak with, I read a something . . . A something which . . . Oh! you know more than a wife's ear should be made acquainted with.

ANNETTE.

Nay, ma'am, you magnify every trifle. But Paddy has let out in his distractions . . . You remember how you used to laugh at Paddy's unconscious revelations? One day he told you, to your face, he wished Squire Griffith would not splice with you; for, by holy St. Patrick! he never could abide a pug nose. All quite innocent and unwitting, ma'am . . . You remember.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

What a sweet dream you remind me of! In those days how light a heart was mine; for in the rays of hope all things shone brightly.

ANNETTE.

I recollect it quite well, ma'am.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

And now to call the boast of Cardiganshire mine own. Combining all the manly beauty and all the intellect, and all the high heartedness of his sex in the most perfect union. When I stood at the altar with him a thought rushed across me. This man, it whispered, whose hand now lies in thine,—*thy* Roland Griffith, shall represent the poor Welshman's wrongs, and the proud Welshman's contumely to parliament.

ANNETTE.

During the nuptial ceremony, ma'am? (*Aside.*) Well, I'm sure!

MRS. GRIFFITH.

'T was but what Roland's father had done, had he lived. I cannot bear to see these Ninnyhams, by the help of Squire Courtall's gold, overtop his family. Sir David is an overbearing, ignorant, hot-headed tyrant. His tenantry, nay the whole neighbourhood tremble at, while they despise him. And Roland . . Roland, all the world affirms, loves Lady Ninnyham!

ANNETTE.

Alas! dear madam.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

He consumes his days and nights amid the circles of debauchery, so that there remains no longer a chance of his wresting the borough of Pennallen, his father's inheritance, out of the clutches of Squire Courtall. Ah, Annette! not only do I miss my husband; but Wales has lost its brightest hope and ornament.

ANNETTE.

Every woman carries her cross in this world, ma'am, especially after she commits matrimony. Man's love commonly ends in . . .

MRS. GRIFFITH.

In what, foolish girl?

ANNETTE.

In the first month or so, ma'am, and after that we may hang ourselves in the noose, if we please; but never get out on 't with struggling.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

No more of that, child.

ANNETTE.

In Paddy's distraction, I was about to tell you, ma'am, he let out, that the notorious 'Becca is like you and me.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

What do you mean?

ANNETTE.

Is of our fair sex, ma'am—an arrant female; and that the Squire is after seducing her to-night at the gate of Pennallen.

MRS. GRIFFITH (*agitated*).

What say you? Rebecca? Ha!

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure! If there's not Squire Courtall's carriage. I left your orders, that you were never to be at home to the young gentleman.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

The *young* gentleman?

ANNETTE.

So he deludes himself, ma'am, as if he was not at the repairing of his face, and the filling up of his wrinkles.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Alas! his resolved opinion of his youthfulness stands in the way of his correcting his vicious propensities; but run Annette, and countermand those orders. Show Mr. Courtall into the parlour.

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure! Here's an odd hour to call! Man, thy name is frailty!

[*Exit* ANNETTE.]MRS. GRIFFITH (*alone*).

How poorly must Courtall think of me, to dare, after his presumption, to visit here! And do I not justify his opinion by admitting him to an interview? But I cannot pause upon a point of propriety, while the fact of Rebecca being a female, and my husband's intrigue with her, trouble my contemplations.

*Re-enter* ANNETTE with COURTALL.

COURTALL.

I could not forego the pleasure, in passing, of just calling to ask after your and Griffith's health. He is absent? That would appear quite a matter of course. Lamentable, *upon my honour*! But I have no reason to regret your husband's bad taste, since but for it this charming condescension . . .

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Mr. Courtall, you may well suppose, after what occurred the other day, I should not have been at home to

you, if a circumstance had not come to my knowledge, which . . . Do not leave us, Annette, but inform Mr. Courtall where Rebecca may be met with to-night. Being in the commission of the peace, he may be glad to learn.

(MRS. GRIFFITH *retires up the stage.*)

ANNETTE.

Please your worship, I only know that that individual will be to be come at on the top of Pennallen, about midnight.

COURTALL.

Ah! that musical lip!

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure!

COURTALL.

Mean you the coming midnight, you little rogue.

ANNETTE.

In about three or four hours, please your worship.

COURTALL (*looking at his watch*).

Then I have not a moment to lose, *upon my honour!* To apprehend that incendiary would be held no mean service in the state of terrorism to which we are reduced.

(*Turning to ANNETTE.*) What a buxom thing 't is!

Whence did you derive your intelligence, my dear?

ANNETTE.

From Paddy, your honour.

COURTALL.

'Tis a tight wench! Ah, that lip! that lip! What an eye! and here's a hand! (*Takes ANNETTE's hand.*) Pretty soft hand!

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure! Your honour should not ogle one so.

COURTALL.

You understand me; I am sure you do, you rosy thing, you!

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure! you are a very loose man to make me blush; so you are.

COURTALL.

'T is the way with us juveniles; but it becomes you, my dear, *upon my honour!*

And is Paddy one of Rebecca's daughters?

ANNETTE.

Can't say, your honour. You may have heard of his queer habit of thinking out loud? La! to be sure, you must. Why once he told your honour, you had best make the most of your few remainder years; for St. Peter allowed no marriages in heaven.

COURTALL.

Very pleasant, *upon my honour!* (*Aside indignantly.*) Few remainder years!

ANNETTE.

Paddy's way, you know. But, I think, for my part, your head and whiskers, as you have ordered them, promise a long life to come.

MRS. GRIFFITH (*having approached near, and overhearing the last words*).

Annette, you forget yourself.

ANNETTE.

Mr. Griffith did so enjoy the joke, ma'am. "Paddy," he cried, "Mr. Courtall is bent 'gainst ever embracing a wife."—"Is it of his own, your honour?" innocently rejoined Paddy; and master laughed the more heartily.

COURTALL.

Very facetious of Mr. innocent Paddy, *upon my honour!* But leave me with your mistress awhile. Nay, I will do her no hurt, *upon my honour!*

ANNETTE (*aside*).

Well, I'm sure! As gentle as an adder that has had his teeth taken out.

(ANNETTE *walks on one side*).

COURTALL.

Any commands to Ninnyham Hall? I may drop in, on my way with the police, to surprise Madam Rebecca, and shall, doubtless, find Griffith tête-à-tête with Lady Ninnyham. . . I beg pardon, with Sir David.

Nay now, my dear Mrs. Griffith, rouse up that spirit a woman ought to bear, when she finds her husband a mere votary of pleasure.

MRS GRIFFITH.

I understand your drift, sir. It seems, you have yet to learn, that she who loves Roland Griffith feels even the pang that rends her heart at his perfidy, ennobling. His errors, if he have such, cannot make Mr. Courtall rise in my esteem; but will debase humanity.

COURTALL.

Is the whole sex to answer for the crime of one?

MRS. GRIFFITH.

In that one was centred all the virtues of his sex.

COURTALL.

Madam, you are blind, *upon my honour*. Seldom a young fellow is worthy the attachment of a woman of sensibility;—that is, to speak more accurately, so *very* a young fellow as Griffith. Seek for your remedy in revenge.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

*Revenge?*

COURTALL.

In the arms of . . . .

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Silence, Mr. Courtall. Such language merits at once my resentment and contempt.

COURTALL.

Your anger makes you unjust.

(*Aside.*) What an engaging creature she is!

(*Aloud.*) When you shall come to feel how amiss you have bestowed your hand, call to mind Charles Courtall, and do not forget that he has a heart for weeping virtue: he has, *upon my honour*!

[*Exit* COURTALL.]

MRS. GRIFFITH.

How amiss I have bestowed my hand! If my Roland be to blame, can I be absolved, whose heart, and life, and soul are one with him?

A sudden heaviness weighs on me!

Annette, are you there? Come with me to my room.

ANNETTE.

'Tis to be hoped we shall hear to-morrow that 'Becca . . .



MRS. GRIFFITH.

Hush! Raise not her unknown image, or no refreshing sleep . . . Come, come! I wish you had not named her.

REBECCA! I would not encounter that woman in my dreams for the whole world! Come!

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure!

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT FIRST.

## A C T II.

## SCENE I.

*Drawing-room in Ninnyham Hall. SIR DAVID NINNYHAM reposing on an easy chair. LADY NINNYHAM rising from the Pianoforte. ROLAND GRIFFITH.*

ROLAND.

Mirror of sweetness! You adorn the effusion of my imagination by the exquisite music you have set it to. My ideas seem to heave pantingly forth, married to immortal strains.

LADY NINNYHAM.

An unequal match, Mr. Griffith. Were your verse shackled for better for worse, it had gained little by change of condition.

ROLAND.

Say not so, bright muse of harmony! Your skill in approximating the fascinations of musical to those of poetical rhythm, is the index of thy soul, which is an emanation of the seraphic nature; without whose image, never absent from my thoughts, all were cold and barren in my heart.

“The world were sad, the desert were a wild.”

LADY NINNYHAM.

Ah ! *vous badinez* ! But positively you grow more rhapsodical than ever.

ROLAND.

The coming on of midnight peals in the air. The pensive pleasures prepare her shadowy car, and I must now retire, to own in solitude thy gentlest influence ; to link our souls in mystic union, and hymn thy favourite name, my Isidore.

LADY NINNYHAM.

This language savours too much of poetry. You banter me.

ROLAND.

Poetry, say you ? I protest in plain and homely prose, by all that's heavenly !—and that's thyself ! I am in love with you to desperation !

LADY NINNYHAM.

Extravagant and wild ! But these are your Platonics.

ROLAND.

Upon my soul, my angel ! I hold a Platonic lover to be a—a—a—very uncivil fellow !

LADY NINNYHAM.

You must be inspired by claret, sir, and your high-flown compliments come by chance.

ROLAND.

As Epicurus' world, and all that it inherits. Troth ! were he right, *thou* wast a very lucky hit, my dear. But for me, I have a design in what I utter, though I sail with every breeze in the teeth of fortune.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Ay, you carry too much canvass for so youthful a steersman.

ROLAND.

I am a skilful pilot as well as bold sailor. You will find that I kiss as close as an older sinner,

“Who has not felt, with soul impassioned frame,  
The power of grace?”

Allow me, thou ever springing brightness! one . . .

(*Taking her hand to kiss her.*) Oh! soft as blossoms!  
sweet as incense! which by angels’ hands presented . . .

LADY NINNYHAM (*interrupting*).

For Heaven’s sake, Mr. Griffith! You are inebriated . .

ROLAND.

With wormwood, if you will not smile on me!

LADY NINNYHAM.

Or you never would, in the presence of her husband . .

ROLAND.

The law of the land, my angel. To take her swing is the liberty, and a separate maintenance the privilege, of the free-born women of England and Wales. Help me! or I shall, while you look on, consume to ashes.

LADY NINNYHAM.

As you would not risk murder! . . .

ROLAND.

Anything to be wicked! A duel’s but a dance to me;  
and for the sake of practice . . .

LADY NINNYHAM.

Have some discretion, giddy-pated boy . .

ROLAND.

"Oh happy state, where souls each other draw,  
Where love is liberty, and nature law!"

LADY NINNYHAM.

Liberty, sir?

ROLAND.

The natural right of your sex. Their fathers, brothers, husbands, upon pretence of it, bid fair every other lustrum for rebellion against their sovereign, and why not as plausibly use the word against themselves?

"E'en thought meets thought ere from the lips it part,  
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart."

LADY NINNYHAM.

Stand off! Good Heavens! My reputation.

ROLAND.

Reputation is a cheat, my lady of the lake! Albeit as Sappho sings of Hesperus she bringeth all good things. To the physician his patients—to the lawyer his clients, and although the one undermine your health, and the other your estate, reputation is justified of her children, and secures their functions from contempt. But we preach! We preach! A health, Sir David! High thoughts and constant youth, and a good constitution!

SIR DAVID (*waking*).

Hip! Hip! The British constitution!

SIR DAVID.

Is not your squalling with Griffith yet over, my lady?

I cannot think, why you ever open that cursed instrument, when you know if I hear it five minutes together, I fall asleep. By my British blood it puts me into a fit of the spleen, till I'm ready to cry.

LADY NINNYHAM.

You are an ignoramus, or, as the poet sings . . . . .

SIR DAVID.

Damn the poet!

LADY NINNYHAM.

A member of parliament, as one of these days we hope to see you, my duck, should evince better taste.

SIR DAVID.

Better taste! I think in conscience, you are not my natural begotten lady, nor of the lineage of my great ancestor; and since Edward the Sixth was Prince of Wales, the Ninnyhams have never quartered arms out of their own generation.

Talk of taste in that nasty piano!

LADY NINNYHAM.

Appeal to Mr. Griffith.

ROLAND.

Music is the soul of all the world!

SIR DAVID.

Wine, you would say. Thou only drunkard i' the world!

ROLAND.

I hold Lady Ninnyham has a most divine touch, by St. Cecilia!

SIR DAVID.

St. Cecilia? Thank God they could never get these heathenish goddesses into my head: I had always a strong brain; but Lady Ninnyham's great grandmother, we know, came in a direct line from Cadwallader. Odds heartlikins! Can your St. Cecilia say as much?

LADY NINNYHAM.

Mr. Griffith plays charmingly himself.

SIR DAVID.

At cricket. The only bowler in the world. *That* I can answer for! But as for your crotchets and quavers, I am born out of the rank, thank Heaven, and could ne'er away with them.

*Enter Servant with* FARMER AP REECE.

SERVANT.

Farmer Ap Reece your honour.

[*Exit* SERVANT.]

(ROLAND *walks apart with* LADY NINNYHAM.)

SIR DAVID.

Hey! What the devil 's the matter this hour of the night?

FARMER.

Your urship, I am sorry, look you now, the free men of the uplands was this afternoon received a threatening notice from 'Becca, that should we dare fote for you at the election which every pody says is nigh, she 'll pay us a fisit by torch light. We all know fat tat signifies, and I am teputed, humbly to entreat your worship will spare our coots and chattels, by not putting up for the porough, do you see, in case any petter candidate should offer.

SIR DAVID.

Uds flesh! Here 's effrontery.

Do ye not every boor of ye owe me above a year's rent? Answer me that.

FARMER.

Hur must e'en confess it.

SIR DAVID.

Are ye prepared to wipe out your obligation ?

FARMER.

Alas ! 'T is peyond our apilities.

SIR DAVID.

Why, ye stark fools ! One other question and I have done. Odds winds and thunder ! You are tenants at will, I take it ?

FARMER.

'T is a verities not to be cainsayed.

SIR DAVID.

By the blood of Cadwallader ! an my hands were not tied as a magistrate, with these two double fists I'd beat your teeth down your throat. But champ on this, you blackguard ! If you tender me not your votes, I'll clear my estate, and you shall be ejected every mother's son of you.

FARMER.

Peseech your honour !

SIR DAVID.

Do you not know, that my will 's a law ? You things ! Dunghills ! Whose breathings savour poison.

FARMER.

The common people was of opinions, tat Squire Griffith—



SIR DAVID.

The common people are common rascalions, lying varlotry! I 'll have 'em dragged through the horse pond. .

ROLAND (*advancing*).

Who named the name of Ap Griffith?

SIR DAVID.

This fellow, with a plague to him, would insinuate, that you might contest the representation . .

ROLAND.

“When impious men bear sway,  
The post of honour is a private station!”

FARMER.

Your honoured father, look you now . . . peg ten thousand pardons—put he—

SIR DAVID.

Peace, fellow!

LADY NINNYHAM (*apart to ROLAND*).

Roland, may I not flatter myself, that your too gallant attentions to me will not end in your making me so unhappy as to oppose Sir David in this little affair of his election, hey, dear Mr Griffith?

(*Looks at him beseechingly.*)

ROLAND (*apart to LADY NINNYHAM*).

Sink the parliament! sooner than make *you* unhappy, my angel!

(*To FARMER.*) My good man, there are really so many strange people get into the lower house, now a-days, that I should not like my name to appear in the

list. Have I not the entrée, the liberty to brush Sir David's private stubbles, hey, my lady? Do I not subscribe to the hunt? Hey, Sir David?

"I'd rather be a kitten and cry mew, than  
One of these same" whig and tory swordfish.

SIR DAVID.

The only shot and the only rider in Wales.

(*To Farmer.*) You hear what the Squire says? There is no other fool eligible but myself, so there is no use caballing on my estates. The moors are mine, and the uplands are Squire Courtall's, and the dingle is mine, and I am of the blood of Cadwallader, Brute's great grandfather, and so is my Lady Ninnyham.

ROLAND.

"I am monarch of all I survey,  
My right there is none to dispute!"

SIR DAVID.

And damn you, sir! Are ye not all my property? I don't care that for 'Becca and her daughters, and whoever I catch rebelling against my jurisdiction, I'll horsewhip 'em within an inch of their lives—I can by the law.

Hell and the devil! Am I not magistrate and a baronet, and can do what I please with my own?

Don't stand staring at me, like a madman, but be off, or I'll order one of my footmen to kick you down stairs, I'd do it myself for a penny. You are little better than a radical. Tramp, you blackguard you, or I'll have you beaten out of this house till every bone of your body is broken.

[*Exit Farmer hurriedly.*]

Pest on him! all radicals are blackguards.

ROLAND.

I fear it must be getting late, my lady ?

SIR DAVID.

Ay. Gad a mercy ! What will madam say to these rakehelly hours ?

ROLAND.

That her husband is the only—(*whispers* SIR DAVID) in Christendom.

SIR DAVID (*with a loud laugh*).

Hardly by 'r lady ! hardly that—but I know none so good.

ROLAND.

Apropos of business, Sir David, I must bid you good night—Lady Ninnyham, bless thy divine beauty ! Your admirer to the death !

LADY NINNYHAM.

Tell your sposa, I shall look in to-morrow, to remind her we expect you both to dinner on Friday. Be in the way. Good-night, *mon cher*.

SIR DAVID.

Od so ! Make a night of it. Champagne and oysters—a barrel below.

ROLAND.

Excuse me—*des affaires pressantes*—(*Sings.*)

“The moon hid her light  
From the heavens that night,  
And wept behind the clouds o'er the maiden's shame.”

SIR DAVID.

'Ware of 'Becca, lad ! She's no maid, I take it.

ROLAND.

Hang her! She'd make every body think, and I never think.

SIR DAVID.

We know how to bestow our time better, boy! It gives a body the hip at once.

ROLAND.

The Welch hills are rank with politics, which are to me the greatest fatigue in the world.

LADY NINNYHAM.

You were of a different opinion, or I mistake, in your father's time?

ROLAND.

"Some master passion every age supplies." But now I know what's what. Hey, Sir Taffy?

*(Spouts.)*

"When the clear depths of thy yet lucid soul  
Were ruffled with the troublings of strange joy,  
When pansied turf was air to winged feet,  
And circling forests, by etherial touch  
Enchanted"—Means, when writing lines to sigh on,  
How green his heart at thirty!—Bard of Ion!  
Business! Business, Sir David!

*[Exit ROLAND.]*

SIR DAVID.

Cracked! cracked! Roland Griffith! Here I stand, that know nothing of books, thank God for my ignorance! So I am fitter than Griffith for a parliament man by half.

LADY NINNYHAM.

He would not be returned for the borough, if he offered. But you heard what he said to Farmer Ap Reece, ducky?

SIR DAVID.

Well, the first thing I do, when I am in the House, shall be to bring in a bill to be allowed to hang up 'Becca without judge or jury.

*Enter* COURTALL.

COURTALL.

What of that incendiary? Lady Ninnyham, I am your most devoted. Sir David, we are on her trail, and if you care to hunt the hills with us youth, within an hour the miscreant is at your mercy, *upon my honour!*

SIR DAVID.

Then as sure as I am a justice of the peace and quorum, I 'll——

COURTALL.

The police are at the gate. Where's Griffith?

SIR DAVID.

Gone, drunk and raving.

COURTALL.

Poor fellow! All the world says he is wrong in the head.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Ay, and has a great many dancing years to trip over ere he come to his senses.

SIR DAVID.

Odds blood! He protested to Farmer Ap Reece, he would not be a parliament man while he had my preserves to amuse him.

LADY NINNYHAM.

So Mr. Courtall can accept the Chiltern Hundreds, if he will do us that kindness. There is no danger of the borough falling into Griffith's hands. The field is clear. I wish Sir David could secure it against our son is of age.

SIR DAVID.

Egad, I agree with Roland in preferring preserves to politics; but I give way to my lady, in hopes to suspend the habeas corpus, to repeal the right of petitioning parliament, and make it high treason to touch the corn laws.

COURTALL.

Why, as you say, Griffith has shown himself too errant a bedlamite to have a chance of success, even did he start. (*Aside.*) I need not tell them of Rebecca's threatening missive. (*Aloud.*) I will write to the minister; but 't is time to mount, *upon my honour!*

SIR DAVID.

By goly! now I look at you again, you are quite a veteran, Courtall!

COURTALL.

A veteran! Not for forty years to come, I fancy, any more than yourself, *upon my honour!*

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! You get younger every day than t' other, I think.

COURTALL.

We must use despatch, if we would secure Rebecca, *upon my honour!*

LADY NINNYHAM.

Ducky, mind and bring 'Becca to the hall in a cage.

SIR DAVID.

Odzooks! Never doubt it.

COURTALL.

Proceed, Sir David, with the police. I will overtake you before you have ridden a mile. No necessity for jealousy, *upon my honour!*

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! I thank you for that. No scandal can have attached to your attentions, I take it, for many a year.

COURTALL.

Sir David, thou givest thyself strange liberties of speech, *upon my honour!*

SIR DAVID.

He! he! he! Roland says you are a—a—a—a *ci-devant jeune homme*. (*Drawls the French words out absurdly.*) He! he! he! Don't quarrel! What, ho, there! Saddle white Surrey!

[*Exit* SIR DAVID.]

(COURTALL *stands enraged for a while, then approaches*  
LADY NINNYHAM.)

COURTALL.

So Griffith behaves without reserve?

LADY NINNYHAM.

As usual.

COURTALL.

As much a coxcomb as ever?

LADY NINNYHAM.

Ah! Courtall!

COURTALL (*more vehemently*).

I say as much a coxcomb?

LADY NINNYHAM.

You do not doubt my obedience?

COURTALL.

Perhaps not: but my gardener tells me, the often shaking of his plants fastens them stronger at root.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Distrust me not. I am grateful. Grateful, said I? Oh! 'Tis the devil's cunning, to candy o'er the sins he puts us to with a fine name.

COURTALL.

What, restiff? Ha!

LADY NINNYHAM.

No, Courtall. Let Heaven term my conduct to Griffith vile and treacherous, I'll call it, think it, mere gratitude for the good deed you have done me.

COURTALL.

'Tis well. You owe everything to me, *upon my honour!* Your bringing up, your introduction ten years ago to your Welch baronet; your union with him, compassed by my representation of your being, like himself, of the lineage of Cadwallader. Even your marriage portion was my gift. When you quitted the school where I had placed you, you had no friend or acquaintance in the wide world; and are you not now . . .



LADY NINNYHAM (*interrupting*).

To what is this relation a prelude?

COURTALL.

I will answer you, when you tell me what you suppose to be my inducement for resigning the borough of Pen-nallen.

LADY NINNYHAM.

I understood you found the late hours . . . the fatigue of . . . at your period of life.

COURTALL.

Your understanding is at fault, my lady. My health was never better. My period of life, say you? Do not my clothes become me? Are there long furrows in my face? Are my hands shrivelled? My legs dwindled? Do I walk with a staff? Do I creep? Are my eyes sunk into their hollows? Is my head frosty? Hangs my chin below my cravat? Is my back bowed? Do I breathe hard? Are not my passions vigorous and stout? I have warm blood within me. A period of life find me, forsooth! I am but five-and-thirty, *upon my honour!*

LADY NINNYHAM.

You don't tell me so? Why, then it seems you are but little older than myself! and what a mistake I made in thinking, when you used to visit me once a quarter at *Madame's*, and I a wee thing no higher than the table, that you were even at that time of mature years.

COURTALL.

A mistake indeed! But 'tis the way of your sex to fancy a man old too soon. Besides, that was in France, my lady. We are now in Wales. The flowers and

plants renew their youth, and likewise eagles. Do not snakes cast their coats, and stags their horns? You may have read of the Phoenix that revives a young Phoenix.

LADY NINNYHAM (*aside*).

And of some old men who have been twice children.

COURTALL.

Time has no leisure to look after a man of my stamina. No one would take me for a minute above four, or six-and-thirty, at most. Would you, Lady Ninnyham? Come, be candid.

LADY NINNYHAM.

I confess you seem abated of your age, since . . .

COURTALL.

I should think so, upon my honour! But be explicit and candid, now.

LADY NINNYHAM.

How old we appear, Mr. Courtall, the world will often judge too hastily; but whether rightly or not, Heaven knows.

*Revenons à nos moutons*, my dear sir. What further service am I to render you in return for your resigning your seat to Sir David?

COURTALL.

You do not call listening to the idle declarations of Griffith a service? Such coquetry is the instinct of your sex.

LADY NINNYHAM.

So yours is pleased to assert.

(*After a pause.*)

I do not like your allusion to my assisting you in the snares you are casting around that gentleman, to destroy

his reputation. I am sometimes tempted to betray your plot to its victim,—to the world.

COURTALL.

And so defeat for ever your husband's prospects of ousting the family of Griffith, and establishing his own in the representation of the borough. Enough, wilt thou continue to aid me in a design to which I have devoted you as I have consecrated my own hopes?

LADY NINNYHAM.

Indeed, Courtall, it goes against my heart to afflict Mrs. Griffith in the way I have lately done.

COURTALL.

Her affliction is necessary to me. The degradation of Griffith—and at the rate he goes on, he will very shortly not have left himself a shred of character—alienates from his cause these barbarous burgesses, over whose minds I would establish a dominion as supreme as, what with the treadmill, the new poor laws, and the police, is the hold I have upon their persons and conduct.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Indeed, Courtall, I can follow thy bidding but a little further.

COURTALL.

But a little further be it—(*aside*) for Rebecca's threatenings make it my best policy to resign at once.—(*Aloud*) But a little further, and by no contingency can Griffith be put in nomination. His popularity in the borough of Pennallen is rapidly on the wane.

*Mais bon soir!* Not to share the honour of Rebecca's capture would be excruciating, *upon my honour!*—*serviteur!*

LADY NINNYHAM.

Wrap up, Mr. Courtall. Will you have Sir David's comforter? Indeed, you had better.

COURTALL.

I am no such baby, *upon my honour!*

[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT SECOND.

## ACT III.

## SCENE I.

*Mountainous scenery by moonlight ; the high road ; turnpike-gate ; and toll-house.*

*(Enter at opposite sides.)*

ROLAND and PADDY.

ROLAND.

Hast thou executed my commission ?

PADDY.

Thoroughly, your honour.

ROLAND.

And why are not the band here ?

PADDY.

Ah, sweet master ! its little you know of military tactics, which lave to me, according to conditions. I larnt more than I should have done of them boys that are nameless, but if the drilling I got among the bogs of my own kingdom of Kerry can be turned to the account of freedom any way, it 's not had for nothing, that 's all.

ROLAND.

But tell me your motives, sirrah ; for . . .

PADDY.

Was it not Squire Courtall I saw on the road towards your honour's villa ? and by the way the hounds rason, that 's by short hand, I guessed Annette would be after telling him that 'Becca might be found on this identical spot we are standing on, your honour.

ROLAND.

How should Annette know ? (*Paddy looks confounded*).  
You rascal, you have not . . . .

PADDY.

Oh, it 's I that am vexed, but it cannot be helped. It 's my fate.

ROLAND.

Then you have actually betrayed Rebecca, you Judas you !

PADDY.

Say on your honour, and break, as you are doing, the heart in my body. Make an end of Paddy O'Reilly, but surely it is not a traitor you take me for ; I would go to the stake first.

ROLAND.

But have you let out ?

PADDY.

The curse of Dean Swift was upon me, sure, your honour : I will tell you no lie. Only lave it to me, and I 'll outgeneral the magistrates in ayrnest. And as we

have time on our hands, I'll explain how I came all my life to be so free in discourse without marning it.

My mother, to begin, was a lady promiscuously.

ROLAND.

Promiscuously?

PADDY.

Not by money or larning, which may be the case with any mechanic, but born by nature. She had a deuce of a speret, and made a moonlight race of it with father. They had scarce a farthen between them, but the priest, having a spite to my grandmother, and being a good-natured man, joined the young couple in a compliment.

ROLAND.

No more, for mercy's sake, Paddy.

PADDY.

One day, a month before I was expected, she was walking in the bit of a garden, poor thing! being used till that summer to plenty of fruit, when my father's horse came home without saddle or bridle, galloping and snorting, that my mother should hear him. Hear him she did! and myself was born of a blunder. Father only had got off to tighten the girths, when——

ROLAND.

Enough! Enough!

But tell me how the hill-side talk of the prospect of Sir David Ninnyham's return?

PADDY.

Guess.

ROLAND.

I cannot.

PADDY.

Why then guess again.

His name shakes them like an ague fit. They say Courtall was the rat of Pennallen, that the cat, Sir Taffy, has eaten him, and now is going to feast upon the mice.

ROLAND.

Did you contrive to leave notices from Rebecca, that her outrages would never cease till they found a dog against that cat?

PADDY.

The whole country was murmuring much of a certain . . . . . The saints be about us! His name has gone clane out of my head.

ROLAND.

Blockhead! Has Cardiganshire more such names than one?

PADDY.

Why, faith, it would be hard to meet with two like your honour.

ROLAND.

What murmur they of me?

PADDY.

Some lamented over you. Many sneered. Most condemned you—all bewailed Pennallen, which had lost you. A baptist minister looked solemn,—*thus*, your honour.

(PADDY puts his forefingers at length ludicrously from his nose.)



ROLAND.

One fox smells out another.

What think they of my attentions to Lady Ninnyham?

PADDY.

Oh, your honour!

ROLAND.

Out with it!

PADDY.

That you can play the fool with anybody, and bate them at it. By my sowl! I had hard work to palaver the natives into visiting your honour to-morrow afternoon. But hither spade some of 'Becca's daughters, as St. Patrick put it into my head to bid them. Och! don't let them see a sight of you anyhow.

(ROLAND goes into the toll-house.)

*Enter a band of Rebeccaites, their faces blackened.*

1st REBECCAITE.

Llewellen lies in jail.

2nd REBECCAITE.

Before they pound him, he played Hell and Tommy with his captors.

3rd REBECCAITE.

Repecca vowed she'd light a pile in consequence. The poor ouse and the jail will go for it.

1st REBECCAITE.

Oh, rare! 'T will warm the town, when there is such cold toings.

2ND REBECCAITE.

Put ta prisoners, look you ?

PADDY.

Is it the prisoners? We'll make them freemen; for as they are used so bad they will know the better to domineer. By the power of the kays! if Rebecca says, set the prisons on fire, it's as good as we had done it already.

[*Exit* PADDY.]

*Enter* REBECCA *from the toll-house.*

(*Loud acclamations of* REBECCA *for ever!*)

REBECCA.

My little wenches! who can look death in the face in the cause of humanity and justice! Ye ancient Pritons! who was never conquered, but always have the victories pravelly, and whose fery aspect would scare Julius Cæsar into a coal-hole! Ye descendants of Welch womans, who at Fiskard turned to the right-about the feterans of Puonaparte,—ye, who can play with tangers as with a tamed snake, whose glorious title of Daughters to Rebecca speaks comfort to the oppressed cottiers, his helpless pabes; to the wretched couple whom the coot Cot has joined together, put whom our atheistic law-makers ould consign to oorsee tan jail allowance,—*and asunder!* Ye, who pring consolation to the infirm and way-worn, but make our haughty squirachy tremble to the tust. Ye righteous avengers of wrong! stand around me in a circle, and swear to be true to Repecca till death!

ALL.

*Till death!*

1ST REBECCAITE.

What's the action we are for now, say you?

REBECCA.

To avenge the seizure of Llewellen, by the destruction of these gates. This monument of the cupidity and injustice of our trespots shall stand no longer!

*(The report of a gun. PADDY rushes in.)*

PADDY.

It's I that have prospered: I've caught the magistrates in their toils.

1ST REBECCAITE.

The police! Shall we fight? Our plood be up, captain.

REBECCA.

Load! Powder enough, say you now?

1ST REBECCAITE.

To plow the earth up to the moon, hur warrant you.

REBECCA.

You have? Look you now. *(Pauses, and then adds, in a quiet, unconcerned voice.)* A flask of brandy! *(A flask is given her.) (She drinks.)* That smacks: It has the right pite.

PADDY.

Have you any more left in the bottle? I did n't care if I took a little sip of it myself. *(Drinks.)*

REBECCA.

How many plood-hounds of our oppressors pe there?

PADDY.

Faith! not a dozen. (*Aside to REBECCA.*) Order us hence; and if you'll kape the two magistrates in play, by the saints!

REBECCA.

Explain yourself.

PADDY.

Don't slip the course of events, and quarrel with your bread and butter before it is spread.

REBECCA (*to her band*).

Leave me to confront the monsters.

2ND REBECCAITE.

Her will tell you in patiences, look you, that Welch-mans was porn to rid the orld of monsters, look you.

REBECCA.

Rebecca knows that Owen Glendower was your cousin, warrant you; but pray you now make travels round to join my little wenches in the copse yonder.

PADDY (*aside to REBECCA*).

Och, mind, it's Rebecca is in that copse!—That's your cue.

[*Exeunt the band and PADDY.*]

REBECCA.

Let me think! A virtuous thought strengthens the heart.

Hewers of wood, and drawers of water oppressed and trampled on peasantry of Wales! To know your affections mine! to lead ye with a master's hand! REBECCA

*the avenger, the patriot ! (Pauses.) The rebel 'BECCA ! On this steep precipice the boundaries of virtue terminate.*

*They are here ! I'll solve the problem when I have more leisure.*

*(Seats herself on the gate.)*

*Enter SIR DAVID NINNYHAM and COURTALL at the head of a body of police.*

COURTALL.

One of the villains, *upon my honour !*

SIR DAVID.

What damned conspiracy are you meditating against this turnpike gate, you rascal you ?

REBECCA.

The goot ooman within, do you see now, was run away in frights and trepidations. Ye might have peholden 'Becca in the oodside, an ye had eyes in your eads.

COURTALL.

Back, my lads, by the ditch on the left, and you have her in the rear, *upon my honour !*

*[Exeunt policemen.]*

SIR DAVID.

Tell me, are you yourself not one of her infernal incendiaries ?

REBECCA.

There be knights in gay clothes, laden with oalth and onor, whom hur hath treamt of, who are in teir souls more incentiaries than 'Becca is, or ever will be.

SIR DAVID.

Abominable villain! I'll have you tossed in a blanket.

REBECCA.

Fillain, say you? Ye Dives! Who whole lordships tepopulate to feast huge trains of servitors. Ye are no fillains—*Not ye!*

COURTALL.

Thou ragged slave!

REBECCA.

Tempted *hur* ever matron with golden hooks, to lose her honour? Do you see now? Some slaves have tone it—slaves of the tevil, *not hur!*

SIR DAVID.

I'll cut you down like a cabbage.

COURTALL.

Hold! We'll secure the poor miserable, presently.

SIR DAVID.

How dost get thy living, thou fish-fag?

REBECCA.

Not by forfeit of hur five wits, look you. Hur is and has been too much out of the sun for a brain fever. 'T is when pereaved of *all* there can come no further tanger. Then, beyond hurt or help, *we feel what life and death is*, and there is no law and no knowledge, mark you, passes *that* consciousness. The strong rays of prosperity have plinded your urships, but herself is wide awake, and hur trade is the lex talionis, like for like,—Gots ownes! *Engence is her trade!*

SIR DAVID.

S' Death! an imp of 'Becca's, whose cursed hand has broken open the cages of the smuggler and the poacher—destroyed our toll-bars, and set fire to our barns and out-houses.

REBECCA.

It is all true: 'Becca *has* purnt, pluntered, set on fire, and plown up. *She has tone more!* For look you;—'Becca has made tremble many a purse-proud etch, who puilt his fortunes on ta miseries, and whose elevation is marked by ta tears of the fatherless and fidow. 'Becca has fisited in hur treams and fisions many a file steward who makes a traffic of his office, and sells his lord's patronage to the highest pidder. Fore Got! She is a ense *of higher justice than flows from man's authority*, and throws the tice for life and teath, to findicate the stricken, the alt, and the plind in the conscience of their oppressors. By her sooth! 'Becca has more true onesty in her ittle finger, Cot pless her! tan a quorum of such fine sentlemans as ye are in your ole pampered podies.

SIR DAVID.

Hell, fire, and fury! That I was within arm's reach of her!

REBECCA.

Gin ye were? Fat then, pray you?

SIR DAVID.

By the flames of my Welch blood! I'd not leave a whole bone in the miscreant's skin.

REBECCA.

Was you as pig and as pold as king Griffin, an oord or two in your ear.

I AM REBECCA!

SIR DAVID (*astounded*).

The devil take you!

REBECCA.

Make not such unders and mazements at her, but come on!

COURTALL.

Where loiter these police?

REBECCA.

Hur will give them mauls and knocks, if her get them in reaches and circumferences of her prave plade, truly.

[*Exit REBECCA into the toll-house.*]

SIR DAVID.

These hands shall——

(SIR DAVID, *entering the toll-house is held back by COURTALL.*)

COURTALL.

Be not precipitate, and we make the miscreant prisoner, upon my honour!

SIR DAVID.

I owe that fellow a grudge, and one salutation from this fist shall cure 'Becca for ever from meddling in my concerns.

COURTALL (*endeavouring to withhold him*).

Yet hear reason, wait for the police.

SIR DAVID.

By the blood of Cadwalladar, which is mine and my lady's!



(SIR DAVID is rushing into the toll-house, followed by COURTALL, when ROLAND GRIFFITH issues forth. They start back.)

SIR DAVID.

Ten thousand devils! Griffith?

COURTALL.

Who would have dreamt of lighting upon you at this hour in the toll-house of Pennallen?

ROLAND.

My way was beset. I had to gallop for my life; eluded the emissaries of Rebecca by slipping off my horse near yonder copse, and then ascended the hill to seek a night's shelter in the toll-house, and found it empty.

SIR DAVID.

This is damned extraordinary, I must say. Why lad, didst not fall in with a virago looking woman?

ROLAND.

In an immense great coat?

SIR DAVID.

To be sure, lad.

ROLAND.

Secured by a wide belt!

SIR DAVID.

Ay.

ROLAND.

And capacious bonnet?

SIR DAVID.

Ay, ay.

ROLAND.

With a big bunch of feathers in it?

SIR DAVID.

Ay, ay, ay.

ROLAND.

The wild wolf ran against me, as if she had been that moment unchained. By Heaven! you would have thought her a thunderbolt.

SIR DAVID.

Odds boddikins, sir, that wild wolf is no other than the plague of the district, Rebecca.

ROLAND.

You don't tell me so! And her daughters?

SIR DAVID,

Damn her daughters! It's her we want. By my British blood! had I her once by the ears, she should not easily shake herself clear.

COURTALL (*apart.*)

'Tis very strange, upon my honour!

SIR DAVID.

Come on! I'm for her.

ROLAND.

And I for her daughters!

SIR DAVID.

'Sdeath ! If three magistrates cannot apprehend her, I'll give Rebecca leave to write threatening notices till not a voter be left on my estate.

*[Exeunt into the toll-house.]*

*Enter PADDY.*

PADDY.

By the saints ! it will be a good joke to lock up the mellow gentlemen, like three barrels of pale Bass's in master's ale cellar.

*(PADDY takes the key from within, and locks the door on the outside. PADDY blows a horn, and exit.)*

SIR DAVID, COURTALL, and ROLAND *appear on the roof of the toll-house.*)

SIR DAVID.

Ud zookers ! Not a shred or sign of the harridan, but look ! if her daughters be not hurrying towards us full speed, as if the devil drove them.

COURTALL.

We are at an ugly pass, *upon my honour !* Could we entrap the wild wolf Griffith affirms ran against him, we might capitulate on terms.

ROLAND.

I' faith, your wolf is like your long-winded members of parliament. Her jaw drives one away. I shall run for it.

*(ROLAND descends.)*

SIR DAVID.

Oh, curse his jokes! He will run off his speed, I suspect, in a way you never dreamt of, when you were his years, Courtall.

COURTALL.

His *years*, Sir David? 'Tis to be hoped I am as agile, though I may not have so much quicksilver in my heels.

SIR DAVID.

That I could light upon 'Becca's hiding-place, and I had a bullet through my head the next moment.

*Enter below a troop of Rebbeccaites.*

1ST REBECCAITE.

Let us urry to purn ta turnpike-gate, and plow ta toll-house to all.

2ND REBECCAITE.

Fery coot! Down ith ta pars! To ta tevil ith em!

*(They proceed to demolish the gates with ejaculations and uproar.)*

SIR DAVID.

How they swarm together! What a hum they raise! Devils choke your wild throats!

COURTALL.

Let us descend, or the rabble will spy us out, upon my honour!

*[Exeunt.]*

1ST REBECCAITE.

Fire ta toll-ouse!

*(The toll-house is set on fire: smoke and flame.)*

*Re-enter SIR DAVID and COURTALL on the roof.*

SIR DAVID.

Infernal luck! Locked in!

COURTALL.

Mad people, forbear! Provide a ladder, or we shall be burnt alive, upon my honour!

SIR DAVID.

Rude slaves! Do ye know what you do? We are magistrates. Ods blood! I am a man of family.

1ST REBECCAITE.

Pig ords? of what family?

SIR DAVID.

Of my father's family, which is the same as Lady Ninnyham's, or I'd never married her . . . the family of Brute, the grandfather of Cadwallader.

2ND REBECCAITE.

Prute! I knew he was not human kinds—not Cot's creation, look you.

SIR DAVID.

Wicked villains! yu will not see us burnt to death? I give you all warning . . .

3RD REBECCAITE.

We give you warnings, talk no more of your noble ploods.

2ND REBECCAITE.

Or 't shall be a 'proach, a 'tilt, and run over to ta lees.

3RD REBECCAITE.

Hur will teach you to know yourself, for once in your life, do you see.

COURTALL.

No escape from these wild cannibals, *upon my honour!*

*Enter PADDY, who unlocks the toll-house, and exit.*

*Enter REBECCA from the toll-house.*

ALL.

Long live 'Pecca! Make way for ta prave 'Pecca!  
Ta plood-hounds scampered off at ta sight of us.

REBECCA.

You have tone pravelly if no ploods be shed in ta service.

1ST REBECCAITE.

No trop, 'Pecca.

REBECCA.

'Tis to my wishes. Always be peaceful, repels—tat's my advice. The queen is an onest gentleman, look you, now.

COURTALL.

If you be the leader, pray end the joke, and order a ladder. We can't hold out much longer, *upon my honour!*

REBECCA.

A ladder for these justices! or they'll be roasted, their prows paste 'em.

*(A ladder is brought—SIR DAVID and COURTALL descend.)*

REBECCA.

Hail orshipful gentlemen, who are come on a fool's errand to the turnpike of Pennallen . . .

SIR DAVID.

By the blood of Cadwallader! you shall smart for this shortly, in the house of correction.

REBECCA.

The first brick of hur ouse of corrections is not yet purnt.

Hur shall carry on 'tis ork, Sir Taffy ; and till justice be tone, her shall make spoil of ta cormorant, who crinds ta faces of ta poor.

1ST REBECCAITE,

We will have kinder laws : the old shall be executed, mark you.

2ND REBECCAITE.

Why should we, being free Pritons do you see, suffer ourselves to be pounded ?

SIR DAVID.

Odds blood ! I shall burst with indignation ; but my arm of power is not loosened. I'll soon manage matters for ye with a strong hand, ye ragged wretches !

REBECCA.

There will come a period, Sir Taffy, when teath shall have 'ithered tat strong hand, tat arm of power. When tose lungs will fail, and casp, and pant, for fent. Under ground, all rank and grandeur are a jest ! There dukes and paronets, gentlefolks, and ta Almighty's poor, whom you call etches, side by side consume.

Chew upon tat !

SIR DAVID.

Abominable ! I would the day of judgment would come before its time to punish such a wicked infernal radical.

1ST REBECCAITE.

Was never such appellations put upon 'Pecca ! Let hur plow out Sir Ninny's prains, say you now ?

COURTALL.

You'll find to your cost that I am a member of parliament, *upon my honour!*

REBECCA.

Ta Lord have mercy upon ta nation, when such fellows as thou art be our law makers!

COURTALL.

Breach of privilege, Rebecca, upon my honour!

REBECCA.

But hur has given you notice, that, if you remain in parliament, hur taughters shall make lawful prize of ta flocks and herds, tat craze upon the poor man's ills and commons, you have appropriated.

COURTALL.

My cattle are guarded by the laws, *upon my honour!*

REBECCA.

My taughters will pring them in, tid ta tevil stand roaring by to guard them.

COURTALL.

Have you no respect for a man of my *distingué* appearance?

REBECCA.

Tat idea alone takes thee to church, where thou dost muster all the fashions and the trinkets, to the last new shirt-stut, to take the ladies. Thou wouldst find fault with the apostles for not having a petter tailor.

COURTALL.

No sin, *upon my honour!*



REBECCA.

'T is but one of your peccadilloes. Your pride of life, your inhumanity remain behind. And your instigation to Sir Taffy to oppress and wrong the poor, is not the least you'll have to answer for.

COURTALL.

Why not ransack Roland Griffith's pastures ?

REBECCA (*endeavouring to recollect*).

Roland Griffith ? Roland Griffith ? Fends he wares with perjuries ? Is he some cheating fintner, who takes half in half in reckoning ? Winces he when he reads that "'T is easier for a camel—— ?" Put let tat pass.

COURTALL.

He is no poor saint, *upon my honour !*

REBECCA.

He has more in his prains, I fancy, than ye twain in your pockets, therefore he is privileged, and so are soldiers, who are not honorary captains, but have pled for their country. Likewise all rent-rack farmers, tat is (*aside to SIR DAVID*) if they do not vote for you, Sir Taffy !

SIR DAVID.

Hell and the devil ! Have you more jobbering before we depart ?

REBECCA.

Only tis, Sir Taffy. I have ta satisfaction of thinking to what end my teeds are tirected . . tat they are sanctified by THE CAUSE. Upon my teath-bed, I shall remember fat I do and have done among my goot works ; and after teath, shall find them encraften in tat pook, where all ta righteous actions of mankind are recorted, look you.

SIR DAVID.

Here, you varlotry, damn you all! the mouth of justice, I am in the commission of the peace. If you deliver up that malefactor, ye shall have a full pardon. Nay, more, by the blood of my ancestors!—I will find employment for every ragamuffin of you on my own estate.

REBECCA.

Fat stops you? Fear you I fill resist? *Tere*, I lay down my tagger; *tere*, my pistols.

SIR DAVID.

Odds boddikins! A spirit in a heap of rags!

COURTALL.

Five sovereigns a head to as many of ye as will help to lodge Rebecca in the county gaol.

REBECCA.

What! do ye still hesitate? I tie my right hand to this post. Now a child might take me. Come on! Who will first petray Rebecca?

1ST REBECCAITE.

Five sovereigns! Hur has no mind to be tammed for all the sovereigns in Europe.

2ND REBECCAITE.

Hur will kill all the tevils in hell tat would harm a hair of 'Pecca's head, look you.

REBECCA (*bursting the cord loose*).

Sustices as ye tesignate yourselves!—do you hear tat? Misery! such spirits as these true-hearted peasantry

should not have fortunes high as are their thoughts, when many a time-serving aristocrat surfeits with onors and estates, and squanders at his table what would keep whole families. Put tis the times' disease and disgrace, when suffering merit, denounced by authority, and unrequited by the state, makes thousands desperate! Look you now, Sir Taffy, write to Government, you have not found one traitor in all ta family of Rebecca. Afay!

1ST REBECCAITE.

Have you any stomachs or appetites to have plows or knogs upon your costards, pray you, tat you make not off?

SIR DAVID.

Villains and rebels!

(SIR DAVID and COURTALL are hurried out.)

*Enter* PADDY.

PADDY.

You thief of the world! take this string and go hang yourself.

REBECCA.

Now my prave taughters, down with ta toll-house!  
Work away, my little wenches!

(*The rioters throw combustibles into the toll-house, and amidst the conflagration and loud huzzas, a rocket is fired into the air. Beacons appear on the distant mountains.*)

REBECCAITES.

No turnpike cates! No poor pastiles! 'Pecca for  
ever! Liberty! Freedom or the grave!

PADDY.

Do ye lave out the land of the saints, ye spalpeens, ye?  
Ould Ireland for ever!

[*The scene closes.*]

END OF ACT THIRD.

## A C T IV.

## SCENE I.

*An apartment in SQUIRE GRIFFITH'S villa.*

*Enter ROLAND and MRS. GRIFFITH.*

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Could I have supposed, you had been that selfish thing they call a roué, Roland, I had never trusted my future happiness with you.

ROLAND.

In all our engagements there must be a cheat upon the sense, to make a perfect pleasure to the soul. You can't deny, Mary Ann, you "*have been* blessed."

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Have been? Through a deception! . . . .

ROLAND.

Deception! Who makes a scruple to lie to a woman will hardly lie with her.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

But when the weaknesses, the affections of our nature, the household charities, are trampled upon, sacrificed . . .

ROLAND.

Megrimms and vapours! I would as lief hear you talk of bills, bonds, and ejectments. Your reproaches are as troublesome as a law-suit, so be so good as to spare my patience.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

To be sacrificed to a rebellious wanton, for such is . . . must be . . . .

*Enter a Servant.*

SERVANT.

Lady Ninnyham's carriage is at the door, ma'am.

ROLAND.

Show Lady Ninnyham up.

*[Exit Servant.]*

On second thoughts, I can offer that service myself.

*(Going.)*

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Roland, stay! to you I trusted the heaven of my hopes.

ROLAND.

My Mary Ann . . .

MRS. GRIFFITH.

I ought to hate thee, and yet I fondly grasp the shadow of thy tenderness.

ROLAND.

Grant me one trifling favour.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Anything, everything Roland, but indifference.

ROLAND.

Till the borough of Pennallen be two days older, do not ask . . . do not condemn me.

*Enter* LADY NINNYHAM.

LADY NINNYHAM.

My dear Mrs. Griffith, I am overjoyed to see you. Fear, I intrude on the license of your linked solitude. How romantic! but faith and troth now, I am an invited guest. Ask your wild man else.

ROLAND.

The charm of Lady Ninnyham's society gives her the *entrée* to all hearths as to all hearts, and ever surpasses expectation.

LADY NINNYHAM.

I don't half like that compliment. Trust you are not an invalid, Mrs. Griffith? I am in fault not to have advised you of my coming.

MRS. GRIFFITH (*rallying*).

That is no fault which we impute none, my lady. Any friends of my husband must always be entirely welcome to our poor lodge.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Sir David came home from Pennallen in a tremendous rage. He protests, Mr. Griffith, that you must be in league with Rebecca, or you had hardly escaped so easily.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

You never acquainted *me*, my dear, of your having been at Pennallen last night.

ROLAND.

Why one can't call to mind every little spot one touches on during one's travels. You would not have me keep a diary in this fashion; *mem.*, a rat had gnawn my stirrup leathers, notwithstanding I went forth with an old pair, but first I kissed my wife,—item—I went to my bankers—item—By the way I cheapened sprats, item—hem! Why you would not have me quote you such skimble scamble quotidiennes Polly?

MRS. GRIFFITH (*aside*).

I know not what to think.

*Enter Servant followed by* COURTALL.

SERVANT.

Mr. Courtall.

[*Exit Servant.*

COURTALL.

I hope I see you well, Mrs. Griffith? Lady Ninnyham, how are you? Griffith, I trust, *upon my honour*, that you will be able to . . . to . . .

ROLAND (*interrupting*).

Glad you 're alive Courtall. Stands Pennallen where it did? And 'Pecca, Cot pless her?

COURTALL.

To ascertain how you got off without some private understanding, is the occasion of my call this morning . . . . (*Aside.*) upon your wife.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Mr. Griffith can have no private understanding with such a character.



COURTALL (*aside to Mrs. GRIFFITH*).

You 've heard I presume, that Rebecca is in reality a woman?

MRS. GRIFFITH (*apart*).

Oh, my heart! I am very ill!

COURTALL (*aside to Lady NINNYHAM*).

I called at the Hall, having something particular to communicate—thence I followed you hither; and I trust to be favoured with five minutes' private talk with you before you leave, *upon my honour*.

(*He turns to Mrs. GRIFFITH.*)

With humble lip, I'd print on your white hand my devotions. Griffith, you must not be jealous now.

ROLAND.

You are a dangerous party, Courtall, with that glowing cheek and wanton superannuated eye; but faith, I am too fashionable a husband to indulge in anything so ridiculous as jealousy.

COURTALL (*aside*).

Superannuated! And I am livelier every day than I was. I feel my joints pliable as wax. My voice is stronger too.

(*Aloud.*) By-the-by, my friends, I have this morning received a letter from the minister containing my appointment to the stewardship, I have at length accepted.

LADY NINNYHAM.

And the consequent vacancy in the borough is to be filled by Sir David. (*To Mrs. GRIFFITH.*) I am sure, your dear man would not do so unhandsome a thing as to offer himself in opposition?

ROLAND.

Let Sir David put the seat in his pocket, or sell it to Lady 'Becca, for what I care. I'll revel in floods of champagne, and inhale the smiles of beauty!

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Are these your serious thoughts?

ROLAND.

Affairs of state, my dear, shall never lie heavy on my head.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Roland! There *was* an Ap Griffith!

ROLAND.

Pooh! Polly, pooh! If Courtall procures the nomination of Sir David, who would set up for a candidate? Why our friend owns as many acres as bonds, and might undo Brazil by selling out — to say nothing of Pennsylvania.

COURTALL.

Nay, Griffith; may I never live to see forty, if I would put my money into the stocks *there* any more than my legs into the stocks *here*, *upon my honour*!

ROLAND.

By the god of light heels and yankeys! you would find it easier to get your shanks out than your money.

COURTALL (*to* MRS. GRIFFITH).

I have a word respecting 'Becca for your ears, would you so ~~far~~ honour me, madam?

(COURTALL and MRS. GRIFFITH retire up the stage.)

ROLAND.

My divine Isidore! allow me to embrace this dear hand.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Rash man! cease that attitude, or, I swear . . .

ROLAND.

In matters of love, a woman's oath is no more to be heeded than a man's.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Think of my reputation, if you make no conscience of destroying your own.

ROLAND.

Conscience, my life, is for serious affairs; you are better bred than to expect it in an intrigue.

LADY NINNYHAM.

I really don't understand.

ROLAND.

Come this way, then, my angel, and I will enlighten you.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Oh, God! Mr. Griffith!

*(ROLAND and LADY NINNYHAM retire up the stage.)*

*(COURTALL and MRS. GRIFFITH come forward.)*

COURTALL.

There is no accounting for the vagaries of men's passions; but, depend upon it, my dear lady, Griffith is more closely connected with Madam Rebecca than . . .

MRS. GRIFFITH.

This is not a tale, Mr. Courtall, to bring a wife.

COURTALL.

*Upon my honour*, you are too good for such a husband—  
see where, on his knees . . .

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Support me, Heaven! Cruel, heartless man!

COURTALL.

Rely on it, madam, the whole sex are alike to Griffith—he has not experience enough to value a woman of your sensibility. There is a maturity required in love, as in other fruits, to recommend its true relish to the distinguishing palate of an epicure. Now, a man of *my* discretion . . . of some four or five and six and thirty, were a better judge—fitter, *'pon honour*, a great deal—for—

MRS. GRIFFITH.

I know not what you say—only be assured that neither jealousy nor resentment can transport me into the character that you would have me.

(ROLAND and LADY NINNYHAM come forward.)

ROLAND.

Flatter *thee*? Impossible! Thee, whose beauty might tire the painter's art, whose wit strikes the poet's envy dumb—

LADY NINNYHAM.

Your husband is turned poet, Mrs. Griffith.

ROLAND.

Who would not under such inspiration ?

COURTALL.

I have known a sonnet beat a bank bill hollow in certain cases, *upon my honour !*

*(Speaks so as to be unheard by LADY NINNYHAM, and with a significant glance at MRS. GRIFFITH.)*

ROLAND.

You blossomed in the days of Tom Little, I take it, thou preterperfect tense of a beau !

COURTALL *(aside)*.

Spite and envy, *upon my honour !* *(Apart to ROLAND.)*  
I am never older than the company I am in, sir. I can . . .

ROLAND *(apart to COURTALL)*.

No more than you can, faint and feeble !

COURTALL.

I can wear ladies' favours I hope, and serve them any way, *upon my honour !* *(Aside.)* I thought my face and figure had been well designed to-day.

*Enter PADDY.*

PADDY.

The Party, please your honour.

ROLAND.

Business ! Bills and business ! *(To LADY NINNYHAM.)*  
There's a black cloud would hide from me the heaven of thy countenance. *(To MRS. GRIFFITH.)* My dear, do the honours to Lady Ninnyham. Courtall, excuse me !

## COURTALL.

The title of your guest, Mrs. Griffith, warrants my offering you my arm. Lady Ninnyham, you will not refuse me that favour!

*(He takes both the ladies under either arm affectedly.)*

## LADY NINNYHAM.

Au revoir!

ROLAND *(kissing his hand to LADY NINNYHAM)*.  
*Mon cœur! Mon faible cœur!*

*[Exeunt COURTALL affectedly between the ladies: LADY NINNYHAM kissing her hand, and MRS. GRIFFITH obviously chagrined.]*

## ROLAND.

Attend the deputation to this room.

*[Exit PADDY.]*

*(ROLAND with exulting voice.)*

“Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,  
While proudly riding o’er the azure realm”——

If I can but manage these burgesses, I shall yet sit for Pennallen.

*Enter PADDY, introducing Farmers and Burgesses.*

## PADDY.

There’s the squire! Show me such another if you can find him.

ROLAND.

Welcome, my worthy friends! What important business brings you all hither?

Are *you* too come, farmer Lloyd? I should almost have forgotten you, had you not more frequently been present to my thoughts than to my sight. Ha! Morgan, my old acquaintance, I think I have not seen you since the death of my poor father.

1ST BURGESS.

Don't pring tears to hur eyes. He was an onered gentleman, so *he* was.

2ND BURGESS.

And he sat in parliament for sessions, look you, and his great grandfathers before him, Cot pless 'em all!

3RD BURGESS.

*He* was no trunkard, pegging your honor's pardons, nor wencher. He fought for the coot of the porough till he ties.

ROLAND.

"He was a man, take him for all in all,  
We ne'er shall look upon his like again."

But what may be the immediate occasion of the honour of this visit?

1ST BURGESS.

The upstart Courtall has thrown everything that is respectable and ancient into the pack ground.

ROLAND.

Mr. Courtall will further with his interest the return of Sir David Ninnyham, who can trace his descent to Cad-wallader!

*(Here all the Burgesses speak together, and as fast as their tongues can talk.)*

2ND BURGESS.

Your family is in the direct line from Adam, do you see? and I'll maintain it as ancient as any.

1ST BURGESS.

Ap Griffith was settled in Wales, before Cadwallader was born, look you.

3RD BURGESS.

Sir Taffy's principles are arbitrary, and he would away with him, mark you.

4TH BURGESS.

He puts injuries and affronts upon Ap Reece, and threatened to throw him down stairs.

5TH BURGESS.

Think, Squire Griffith, down stairs! Farmer Ap Reece!

1ST BURGESS.

It must not be endured, do you see?

2ND BURGESS.

Sir Taffy is an advocate for modern corruption.

3RD BURGESS.

He would bring the armed policeman against the natives, look you now.

4TH BURGESS.

And the poor Welch farmer to pay the piper, mark you.



1ST BURGESS.

English against Welchman, do you see.

2ND BURGESS.

Soldiers beside the laws, mind you.

3RD BURGESS.

'T is a plot against the liberties of Ancient Priton, warrant you now.

ROLAND.

Friends! countrymen! and lovers! Why this to me?

1ST BURGESS.

Your forefathers had not suffered it: they had kept Sir Taffy down, look you.

2ND BURGESS.

They was wise sentlemans, and was tirect us coot counsels.

3RD BURGESS.

And you are their child, look you, and shall chastise the giants, and curb the monsters and griffins, as the Ap Griffiths a thousand times pefore in past ages.

1ST BURGESS.

And teach the saucy jacks how they profook hur Welch ploods, and hur cholers, look you, or never more wear leek upon St. Tavy's day.

ROLAND.

Your confidence is flattering. Can I merit it by deed?

1ST BURGESS.

Hur warrant you. Apandon you trabbling and trinking, and behave as a sentleman should do.

ROLAND (*aside*).

"Purge, leave sack, and live cleanly."  
(*Aloud.*) What then?

2ND BURGESS.

Free us from the anarchy of 'Pecca and her little 'enches.

ROLAND.

How is that feat to be accomplished?

1ST BURGESS.

By opposing Sir Taffy, do you see!

2ND BURGESS.

That's it, look you. Take the rights and liberties o.  
the porough under your own protection, and you will cut  
the ground from under ta foot of 'Pecca.

ROLAND.

But,—Will you hear me?

3RD BURGESS.

Hur warrant your honour! Speak!

ROLAND.

Good friends! Our lot is cast in dangerous times—  
Our financiers are wolves, and foxes are their secretaries  
—Tigers prowl in our courts of justice. Welchmen!  
what think you of this state of things? Whom the wolf  
does not devour, the fox pillages—Who escapes from him  
is knocked down by the ass. The tiger makes his prey  
of innocents, while they who are robbers and depredators  
in the sight of Heaven, are delivered by the pigeon.  
Methinks in this emergency, it behoves the animals to  
choose a representative endowed with strength and skill.

Electors of the borough of Pennallen! In our little community there should be but *one* paramount interest—*one* chief for your homage . . . *one only*, mark me—but,  
(*Advancing majestically.*)

*That one must be,—THE LION!*

BURGESSES.

Hurrah! Hurrah! The porough of Pennallen has its lion, do you see.

ROLAND (*with dignity*).

Tell me not of that lion, but go home, and with closed lips pray that Wales may yet be redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled; and remember when you vote, that the deliverer's name is—ROLAND AP GRIFFITH!

BURGESS.

A chip of the old plock, Cot pless him! and shall be Cot Almighty when Cot ties, warrant him!

(*Exeunt Burgesses with loud shouts.*)

ROLAND (*apart*).

Now, thou rich Englishman, who tookest advantage of my father's deathbed, to snatch from his son the inheritance of this borough, and who hopest to transfer the prize to the hereditary rivals of the house of Griffith,—Now let us come to the contest. All the machines are ready for the glorious struggle—the instruments are tuning for the concert—nought is wanting but to throw off the mask—and——

Paddy, has Squire Courtall yet departed?

PADDY.

Sure, your honour, he has taken Lady Ninnyham for shelter from the rain among the geraniums.

ROLAND (*apart*).

What can be the nature of Courtall's intimacy with Lady Ninnyham? Follow me, Paddy; I shall require your attendance.

PADDY.

By my sowl! his honour has work enough on his hands for St. Briarius.

[*Exeunt.*

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SCENE II.

*A summer-house: entrance from the back: on the right folding-doors half open, through which an orangery is seen: rain pattering.*

COURTALL and LADY NINNYHAM seated.

LADY NINNYHAM.

You agitate me. Say, in a word, what you would have me do?

COURTALL (*gives her a paper*).

This opiate is my answer!

A large body of the burgesses shall arrive at Ninnyham Hall during his stupefaction. Their evidence must annihilate all chance of Ap Griffith ever representing the borough of Pennallen.

*Enter REBECCA (behind).*

REBECCA (*aside*).

Ap Griffith, saith he? 'Tis no fery coot manners to make interruptions—so hur will hear more, look you.

COURTALL.

Wilt thou no answer?

LADY NINNYHAM.

Ha! ha! thou demon! I! I cannot breathe!

COURTALL.

What mean you? 'T is not poison you hold as if it burnt you.

LADY NINNYHAM.

No, not poison? *That* but prostrates the clayey tabernacle; but *this*, as you would wish me to apply it to Ap Griffith, would rob his existence of all that gives it value. To destroy the body were the deed of an angel in comparison. Not poison? Powder of hell be thy name! Courtall, I would not administer this drug for all earth's glories to spring round our path like weeds.

COURTALL.

Isidore, if not for the advancement of your husband and your son, you shall in awe and apprehension of my anger.

LADY NINNYHAM.

You presume too far upon the obligations I am under to you, Mr. Courtall.

COURTALL.

*Presume!* another such word, and—(*stops short*).

LADY NINNYHAM.

Had we not better, sir, return to the house?

COURTALL (*grasping her by the wrist*).

Were Sir David to be told, that the veins which enamel that fair breast and arm swell not with a drop of ancient British blood . . .

LADY NINNYHAM.

May I not boast the blood of Cadwallader?

COURTALL (*with scornful emphasis*).

*You!*

(*after a pause.*) *Will you infuse that opiate?*

LADY NINNYHAM.

I have already said.

COURTALL.

You owe your lineage to no Welch gentlewoman. Your mother, the fille de chambre of an emigrant lady, whom the French Revolution drove from her native land, was some years subsequently wedded to a tailor's apprentice in May Fair. Thou, misproud Isidore, wast their only offspring. This fatal fact I will acquaint your husband with, unless . . . *wilt infuse the opiate?*

LADY NINNYHAM.

Sir David will require more than mere assertion to disprove the circumstantial account you gave of my birth and parentage, Mr. Courtall.

COURTALL.

What if I produce your living father, on whose hands you will be thrown, like a worthless weed away? *Will you infuse the opiate?*

LADY NINNYHAM.

I would not do such a fiendish act, though that father, you now pretend to be living, were to command me.

COURTALL.

*Pretend!*

Con o'er this!—and after this! . . . and this! . . .

*(Places letters on the table.)*

He *does* command you!

*(Pauses—then, in a voice of thunder.)*

Fool! *I am your father!*

*(COURTALL rushes out: LADY NINNYHAM, with a faint shriek, sinks upon a chair: REBECCA advances, secures the letters, and then approaches LADY NINNYHAM.)*

REBECCA.

Pe not alarmed, my tear.

LADY NINNYHAM *(starting)*.

Good God! what art thou?

REBECCA.

Hur is the fearfulest wench in South Wales, and hur is called Repecca!

LADY NINNYHAM.

Rebecca! rebellious depredator!

REBECCA.

Coot ords, pray you. Let not my appellative condemn me. A fencer may be nicknamed a coward—is he so for tat? How is hur more a tepridator than other podies? All who live in the orld are but creat and small fry, that

exist by feeding upon one another, look you. The pig fishes make a show of their onesties and religions, and so forth, and then but fasten their claws on the ittle fishes, till they draw plood, apusing them all the while, do you see, for knaves and curs; but if worrying of innocent lambs be held a crime in heaven, the Lord help the guilty!

LADY NINNYHAM.

Let me pass! Your very name is poison in the ears of all well-disposed persons.

REBECCA.

No poisons, my lady, look you now, but serves for some use, which is confirmed in *that* your father gave you for the penefits of Roland Griffith, and which you hold so gingerly within your palm.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Heavens! And have you overheard?

REBECCA.

Everything! So you will just certify your papa of your readiness to trug Ap Griffith's wine, and trust to Repecca for preserving him with the finest sugar of infentions.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Lay snares for the destruction of a fellow-creature's fair name? Never!

REBECCA.

Hur will give such notification to the Squire, look you, that you will have no possible opportunities for fulfilling your promise to your father.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Would Mr. Griffith, reckless as he is, attend to a communication from such as you?



REBECCA.

Reckless! Humph! Noting is perfect porn, my lady. Ap Griffith may have faults and fagaries, do you see; but if men's secret, youthful ploods should judge 'em, or 'oomen's either, there would follow the generallest execution that e'er was witnessed in Ancient Britain, since she 'scaped the teluge, look you now.

LADY NINNYHAM (*half aside*).

I am in a dread strait. But Sir David . . .

REBECCA.

Do you do as I'd have you, and the descendant of Cadwallader shall never learn from me he has been pampoozled by the issue of a London tailor.

LADY NINNYHAM.

I'd best obey you, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Coot! for your father is here. Farewell!

*Exit REBECCA.*

*Enter COURTALL.*

COURTALL.

*Now?*

LADY NINNYHAM.

Oh, sir! My father!

COURTALL.

First;—wilt deal in this matter as I requested you?

LADY NINNYHAM.

I dare not longer hesitate.

COURTALL.

Then we are friends.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Give me your blessing, sir.

COURTALL.

There! there! And I desire there may be no more said of the matter.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Oh, my dear pa! (*She embraces him.*)

COURTALL.

Zounds! Lady Ninnyham! Don't spoil my complexion! You hug like a she-bear! My right whisker feels to me in jeopardy.

LADY NINNYHAM.

What mean you, papa?

COURTALL (*his hands to his whiskers*).

Papa me no papa! I tell you I am none of thy papa, Lady Ninnyham! The peril was imminent, but 't is past. On second thoughts, you need not retain those letters.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Letters, papa?

COURTALL.

Damn it! Don't call me papa every other word. I only acknowledge that title under the rose. 'T were a good joke, if a man of my *exterieur* could be papa to a woman of your period of life. I am too young looking for that, *upon my honour*! Sir will do every jot as well as Pa. But return me the letters.

*Enter* ROLAND.

ROLAND.

Lady Ninnyham, I am commissioned to support your fair hand on my arm, to where a slight refectation awaits the honour of your presence. Do I espy a tear? Why, what little enormity hast been laying to thy charge, my fair penitent?

COURTALL.

Sir, I am not my lady's father confessor.

ROLAND.

'Twere less cozenage than to prepare a fair dame for confession in the fantastical figure of her lover. It does not accord with the fitness of things in the least, Courtall.

COURTALL.

My figure may not happen to dance in the circle of your taste, but I trust to get to heaven, nevertheless, *upon my honour!*

ROLAND.

We are likely enough to differ about the way thither, Courtall; but we can go to the devil together, if you have no objection.

COURTALL.

'Tis a pity, *'pon honour!* that a fellow of your parts has not more discretion than to choose that road.

ROLAND.

Discretion is the virtue of an old maid. I may live up to thy discretion, but query whether you will ever arrive at my parts.

LADY NINNYHAM.

Was there no mention of a certain refection, to which I regret I cannot devote a minute?

ROLAND.

Mrs. Griffith is even now impatient for you to partake thereof.

LADY NINNYHAM.

I must bid her a hasty adieu: my carriage is at the door, and Sir David will be wondering.

ROLAND.

Allow me the honour to wait upon you.

LADY NINNYHAM (*to* COURTALL).

Stop! You tread upon my flounces, father!

COURTALL (*in a whisper to* LADY NINNYHAM).

*Those letters?*

ROLAND.

Ha! ha! Reverend father, say you? No absolution now! Take my advice,—get yourself a surplice; the authority of the habit may cover your peccadilloes.

Thou worn-out almanack at the 28th day of December! Ha! ha! ha! ha! Capital! Fancy!

(*Exeunt* ROLAND and LADY NINNYHAM.)

COURTALL.

Capital fool! Who, if Lady Ninnyham only obeys my directions, shall wear motley for the rest of his existence. Taunt me with my years, forsooth! I have a spirit yet—alive and lusty, if I could match my features. Fall from me half my age. Until I hold the wife of

Roland Griffith in my arms! She is delectable. Shall not a man for a little foolish bending of the head, or wrench o' the back, do offices of gallantry?

*Enter ANNETTE.*

ANNETTE.

Beg pardon! I thought the Squire had been in the rain. Mistress Griffith sent me to him with his mantle. Is he not here either?

COURTALL.

Come hither my charmer; how are you?

ANNETTE.

Pretty well, I thank you kindly.  
Where can master be?

COURTALL (*taking her by the hand*).

A word, my dainty. Do you think you could affect a good-looking gentleman, who in return would refuse you nothing, *upon my honour!*

ANNETTE.

I might mayhap, provided he have not got beyond the confines of six, or seven, or eight and sixty, your worship.

COURTALL.

That 's out of reason, child. I spake of the borders of thirty. Dost thou see anything about me thou dost not like?

*Enter REBECCA behind.*

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure! And yet now I look again, there are no white hairs of three score left—if it were not for your

eyebrows, and you will bring them about shortly, I warrant me.

But is it your worship wishes to marry me outright, without a portion?

COURTALL.

What a notion! I make love sometimes, but as to committing matrimony! 'Tis a vile invention child—worse than a monopoly, and a destroyer of all civil intercourse. *Marry? go to!*

ANNETTE.

Marry, come up!

COURTALL (*seizes her*).

I'll be such a loving bountiful friend! I'm all of a fire!

ANNETTE.

Have done with your towzing and mowzing; and let me go, you profligate old man!

COURTALL.

Old? you satirical vixen you; I am in the prime of life. My pulse beats high.—There's a caper for you! (*springs aloft.*)

(ANNETTE, *escaping, leaves the mantle with* COURTALL.)

ANNETTE (*courtesying*).

If ever I suffer myself within your clutches again, punish me with such another squeeze.

COURTALL (*following her*).

I will have one *leetel* kiss, upon my honour!

ANNETTE (*avoiding him*).

'T is past time of day for you to buzz. I hope you may get it! (*Sees REBECCA.*) Oh, la! There 's a figure!

COURTALL.

*Rebecca!*

ANNETTE.

Rebecca! Oh! oh! Help! Well, I 'm sure!

[*Exit ANNETTE, screaming.*]

COURTALL.

'Becca, I 'll give you a sovereign to tell me your business here.

REBECCA.

Liperty! *Yours* I have heard.

Are you not fine pillar of state! Who should be the punisher, and not the doer.

COURTALL.

Impertinent devil!

REBECCA.

Hath not experience taught you to afoid these lecherries? Age should be the holy sanctuary of life, do you see, chapel of ease for wearied pilgrims. 'T is as accurst to rob tat of its ornament, look you, as to turn a priest's festment into a cloak of sin.

COURTALL.

I must dissemble.

REBECCA.

Mr. Courtall, ta lust of ta flesh is your meat and trink, your liprary, and your religion.

COURTALL.

Very concise and smart, *upon my honour!* But who is he moves you to these outrages?

REBECCA (*indignantly*).

The heel of injustice, that which arouses a worm, moves Rebecca.

COURTALL.

Nay, in these commotions *you* are but the puppet in the hands of some higher miscreant. Whose minister art?

REBECCA (*with stern emphasis*).

*Whose is the earthquake*, pray you? Hark, steps! Hur will hold confabulations with you up and down this alley.

COURTALL (*aside*).

I will throw the cloak of Griffith over me, that, if we should be observed, he may have the credit of Rebecca's company.

(*Wraps himself in the mantle of GRIFFITH.*)

[*Exeunt.*

*Enter* MRS. GRIFFITH and ANNETTE.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

An assignation in my own house!

ANNETTE.

She is a bold hussey, 'Becca, and cares for nothing.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Only let me encounter her on these premises. I'll show I've too much spirit to endure such usage. How may I know the filthy thing?



ANNETTE.

She 's tall and well shaped, and—

MRS. GRIFFITH (*looking displeased*).

I thought she had been a little crooked.

ANNETTE.

Look you there now ! If she be not wending this way again, all familiar like with master himself ! Well, I 'm sure !

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Run, child, and raise the house ;

[*Exit* ANNETTE.]

My patience tires with such oppressing wrongs.—(*With a gesture of disgust.*)—Faugh ! I 'll listen—my ears shall be testimonies of his falsehood. Let me contain myself—here 's usage ! with a witness.

(*Retires into the orangery.*)

*Re-enter* COURTALL and REBECCA.

COURTALL.

What art like, with thy touch of black cork, and slakes of red ochre, thou scourge of Cardiganshire ?

REBECCA.

Hur is young enough to be a maid—handsome enough to be a mistress—cunning enough to be a wife—and restiff enough to be a widow.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

So, so ! handsome and young ! Mighty well !

COURTALL.

Be'st thou what thou mayst; do what I named and I'll ensure you a free pardon, and 500*l.* to boot!

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Give madam 500*l.* to do what he named! 'Tis easy to guess what *that* was.

500*l.* for—

REBECCA.

Ta pribe is like a loud pell to a bad dinner. Tear coot looking Roland Griffith! 'Pecca could no more harm a hair of his head than hur own. Hur loves him as hurself.

MRS. GRIFFITH (*aside*).

Was ever such assurance? Very fine!

COURTALL.

You know he is the head and front of thy offending.

REBECCA.

Hur love the interests of Ap Griffith all the same as hur were one podies and one flesh with him, warrant hur.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

I can bear it no longer.

(MRS. GRIFFITH *rushes across the stage to* REBECCA. *Vehemently.*)

Mighty well! mighty well! You rampant hussey! Are you not ashamed to be caught seducing other women's husbands?

REBECCA.

Ta devil! the lady make pig mistakes.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Did not I hear your acceptance of that base man's offer of 500*l.* *to do what he named?* Faugh! did not I hear you own your nauseous passion? For you, Mr. Griffith,—stand away, sir! I'll not condescend to waste a word upon you; but I'll have your companion lodged in the gaol. It is the fittest place for her.

REBECCA.

The lady is quite in faults with her suspicions and surmises, look you—and hur bid you all coot day!

MRS. GRIFFITH (*interposing*).

You sha' n't pass, till I behold that shameless countenance of yours. Nay, nay, baggage, I'll strip your . . .

REBECCA.

For Heaven's sake! Hold!

MRS. GRIFFITH (*more impetuously*).

Come, giglot, come! Why, you scare of the county! you must hide your tempting visage, must you? Off with your wild gear, and show yourself in the true likeness of . . .

(MRS. GRIFFITH *fastens on REBECCA, who resists: in the struggle her great coat drops down, and her castor is knocked off.*)

(AP GRIFFITH *stands discovered.*)

MRS. GRIFFITH (*with a loud scream*).

My Roland!

COURTALL (*throwing off the mantle*).

*Alter et idem, upon my honour!*

ROLAND (*with a bow*).

My dear, though not the first wife who may have met with such a rival, you are the first who ever fancied her husband was carrying on an amour with *himself*! Courtall, I will consider your offer of 500*l.* to inform against Ap Griffith. Suffer me now to be bail for 'Becca?

*Enter TOBY, who in ludicrous consternation, as he crosses the stage, picks up the greatcoat and bonnet, and makes his exit.*

COURTALL.

*You, that inciter to rebellion!*

ROLAND (*interrupting*).

(*With enthusiasm.*)

I.

"Rebellion! foul dishonoured word!  
Whose mortal blight so oft hath stained,  
The holiest cause that tongue or sword  
Of mortal ever lost or gained!"

II.

"How many a spirit, born to bless,  
Hath sunk beneath that withering name,  
Whom but a day's, an hour's success,  
Had wafted to eternal fame!"

*Rush of ANNETTE and Servants.*

ANNETEE.

Seize 'Becca! where's the miscreant?

ROLAND.

Ask my lady.

[Exit ROLAND.]

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure !

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Only a mistake . . nothing the matter. Away with you all !

ANNETTE.

Well, I'm sure !

[*Exeunt ANNETTE and Household.*]

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Excuse me, Mr. Courtall.

COURTALL.

But a word, madam. I fear I cannot avoid the necessity of issuing a warrant for the arrest of your band, now that . . .

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Merciful Heavens !

COURTALL.

Since no better expedient presents itself for his preservation, you may possibly endure the addresses of the most devoted of your slaves.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Insulting man ! rather let ruin overwhelm us !

COURTALL .

I hope, madam, you only affect anger, because you know that your frowns are becoming. If you hope for

any favour for Griffith, whose identity with Rebecca it is at my option to divulge, my ardent passion must meet with sympathy, *upon my honour!*

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Then let Heaven in its mercy send Roland deliverance, for the detestable alternative you propose I reject with indignation and abhorrence!

[*Exit* MRS. GRIFFITH.]

COURTALL.

So, so! Her husband must be incarcerated. Her pride lowered, she may lend a more pliant ear to my amorous suit. If Isidore keep her word, Ap Griffith will lie stupefied in apparent intoxication to-morrow evening at Sir David's. Then, with the burgesses I . . . Say also I bring the officers of justice? Opportune occasion! (*After a pause.*) It shall not escape me, *upon my honour!*

[*Exit.*]

END OF ACT FOURTH.

## ACT V.

## SCENE I.

*Apartment in ROLAND's house.*

*Enter ROLAND and MRS. GRIFFITH.*

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Nature cannot have gifted me with the thousand little requisites that might attach you to your home, or——

ROLAND.

You are too generously tender of reproaching me, my love; but my notorious recklessness has served to guard my purpose from detection, and has beguiled Courtall into resigning his seat in parliament. *L'affaire est faite!*

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Alas! Roland! you seem wholly blind to the danger of rousing the slumbering peasantry, and turning them loose like the unbridled steed, before unconscious of his hoofs.

ROLAND.

Danger !

“Send Danger from the East unto the West,  
So Honour cross it from the North to South,  
And let them grapple!”

MRS. GRIFFITH.

What honour can accrue from a prison—from a public trial—from . . . Great God! must I say it . . . from transportation?

ROLAND.

Reflection comes too late. The bridge is raised behind me.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

The past alone is hopeless. Recall thy wandering mind. This insatiate craving of thy heart—what is it, Roland?

ROLAND (*with enthusiasm*).

To help the fatherless and poor unto their rights, and “vindicate the ways of God to man.”

MRS. GRIFFITH.

How alarmed I am for you, my dear! You dream on the edge of a precipice of universal licence. Even already . . . . (*Pauses.*) You must have heard the report?

ROLAND.

What report?

MRS. GRIFFITH.

That last night the woman that keeps the gate at Glynwarr was shot by one of your banditti.

ROLAND (*in agitation*).

No, no! Unsay it.



MRS. GRIFFITH (*shakes her head*).

ROLAND (*apart*).

Hear it not, oh God of vengeance! Am I to blame, because the instruments of thy wrath o'erwhelm at once the righteous and the guilty? Who can command the flames in destroying the noxious vermin to spare the fertile field? Fool! oh, shame! Presumptuously to dare wield Jove's thunder, yet with thy aimless arm to let the Titan 'scape, while the poor pigmy suffers.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

I fear I have distressed you.

ROLAND.

You have, yet I thank you for it. I have been too presumptuous. I have ventured further than I ought.

(*He takes a turn or two across the stage.*)

(*After a pause.*)

Mary Ann, I renounce my rash design, and will never disquiet you more. The recovery of Pennallen has been dearly purchased by your uneasiness.

MRS. GRIFFITH.

How I am relieved to hear your resolution; but had you not better hide yourself for a while? Courtall threatened . . .

ROLAND.

Hide! Not I.

"I must be found!

My parts, my title, and my perfect soul,  
Shall manifest me rightly."

Be witness of Rebecca's crowning achievement this evening at Ninnyham Hall, and thenceforth receive

entire my conquered heart. But there's much to do.  
Come, Desdemona; "we must obey the time."

MRS. GRIFFITH (*raising her hands*).  
Desdemona!

[*Exeunt.*]

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SCENE II.

*Drawing-room in Ninnyham Hall.*

SIR DAVID, LADY NINNYHAM, and *Guests*.

*Several of the Company.*

Many returns, Sir David, many happy returns of your  
natal day!

SIR DAVID.

Odds heartikins! I thank ye! The blood of Cad-  
wallader this day has reason to be proud. Eh, my lady?  
You know what I mean.

LADY NINNYHAM.

It is likely, my friends, that the principal inhabitants of  
the borough will wait upon Sir David, to . . .

SIR DAVID (*interrupting*).

Odds blood! Don't tell! They will be the more  
delighted at my honours.

GENTLEMEN.

We are curious to learn.

LADY.

We shall be happy to congratulate, when . . .

SIR DAVID.

To be sure you will, and so shall I. Odds buds! It will remind you of my grand-grand-uncle, a thousand years ago, who was crowned with one huge carbuncle for ridding the world of divers dragons with seven heads a piece, and serpents with tails a mile long.

LADY.

You don't believe in the truth of the legend you speak of, Sir David?

SIR DAVID.

Odds flesh! Do you take me for an atheist, madam? It's only the poor and the low that are such sort of cattle as to question the exploits of the lineage of Brute! I go to church, and not to chapel. Not believe in my grand-uncle's engagement with the seven-headed dragon? I am no papist, I hope, to worship only sensible images. I am no chartist, like 'Becca, who would destroy all family genealogies; but I am of the ancient blood of Cadwallader, and my foot is in my hereditary hall, built on the very site, mind me, where Merlin, of famous story, was used to dream, and where he prophesied of the honours that await the descendant of the race of Brute. Madam, I'd have you to remember that I am a knight, baronet, and before this day closes! . . .

But, odds boddikins! I wait no longer for Griffith and his wife.

LADY NINNYHAM.

You will have no need, Sir David, for Mrs. Griffith . .

*Enter MRS. GRIFFITH.*

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Lady Ninnyham, I hope I see you well?

*(They shake hands.)*

LADY NINNYHAM.

My dear Mrs. Griffith, how d'ye do? Where have you dropped your giddy-pated lord? *(Aside.)* Can Rebecca, indeed, have had power to keep him away?

*(SIR DAVID and MRS. GRIFFITH shake hands.)*

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Sir David, I fear I have tired your patience. Ap Griffith hopes to join your board, ere we fair apple-eaters have left the dessert the prescribed half hour.

SIR DAVID.

The only fellow for a bumper toast in Wales! But by the blood of my ancestors! no flinching for many a half-hour, please the pigs!

LADY NINNYHAM.

The fashionable allowance, Sir David, being so ruled in the royal palace, and, as in all points, her Majesty's example is unexceptionable.

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! Say you so? Command at my board jure de vino, shall the queen, God bless her! We'll drink maliciously, so that half an hour might send us to bed reeling.

*Enter Butler.*

BUTLER.

The dinner is on the table, please your worship.

*(Loud shouts.)*

*Enter Servants.*

1ST SERVANT.

Help! help! we are all undone!

2ND SERVANT.

Oh, sir! Where is your two-handed sword?

SIR DAVID.

Odds blood and thunder! What is the matter?

MAID.

Down all on your knees and marrow-bones! 'Becca's come!

3RD SERVANT.

She's up in arms with her daughters. They will pull the house down with fire and sword!

*(Loud shouts and uproar without.)*

4TH SERVANT.

Do you hear the mandrakes?

SIR DAVID.

By the bones of Cadwallader! I am blasted! My birthday, too! Sir David Ninnyham's birthday!

*(Noise of the bursting open of the gates and doors without. The ladies of the company throw themselves into the arms of the gentlemen, screaming vociferously. Loud shouts and uproar.)*

LADIES.

Oh, lud ! lud ! What shall we do ? What will become of us ?

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Terrible ! What can Roland intend ?

LADY NINNYHAM *(aside)*.

Sure enough I shall have no opportunity to keep my promise to my father. Rebecca has verified her words.

SIR DAVID.

Fly to the town, some of ye, and raise the country.

*(Loud cries without of "Rebecca for ever !" and "Down with the laws !")*

SERVANTS.

Make haste ! We have way enough.

*[Exeunt several.]*

BUTLER.

I'll into the cellar, and bar the door, and drink and die a martyr, ere they reach me !

*[Exit Butler.]*

*(Shrieking without : rush of others of the household, clamouring and wringing their hands.)*

COOK.

If the wenches ain't all marched into the dining-parlour !  
They 'll make no bones of fish and poularde, and your  
worship's favourite curry.

SIR DAVID.

By the voice and blood of Cadwallader ! By thunder  
and lightning ! There 's no standing *that* ! Devour our  
dinner !

COMPANY (*wailing*).

We were all so sharp set !

SIR DAVID.

I am a magistrate yet, God be thanked ! Come with  
me, friends, and we 'll teach these people better morals.

(*Chorus without of " Oh, the Roast Beef of Old England !"*)

SIR DAVID.

" The roast beef of old England !" My Welch blood  
is up ! Tooth and nail to the rescue !

(*Exit hurriedly SIR DAVID, closely followed by all present.*)

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## SCENE III.

*Handsome Dining-room: a Banquet set out. Tune—"The Roast Beef of Old England.")*

REBECCA and her Daughters and PADDY clamouring and taking their seats.

PADDY.

Arrah, my honeys! We will live, we will eat, we will drink.

1ST REBECCAITE.

We tefy the laws.

2ND REBECCAITE.

Down with ta laws, and custos rotulorum.

3RD REBECCAITE.

Stifle ta laws, and we are princes!

ALL.

Kings! Kings!

PADDY.

Is it kings? Och! If you be true pathriots, droph a tear to the misfortunes of ould Ireland schrimped of her rights, when its only one duke that England allows her, and its kings she ought to have.

REBECCA.

Sit my coot cousins! Don't be pashful. This feast Rebecca hath provided ye!

"Now coot tigestion wait on appetite,  
And health on poth."

(*All sit and eat.*)



*Enter SIR DAVID and LADY NINNYHAM, MRS. GRIFFITH and Guests. (They raise their arms, and groan in amazement and consternation.)*

SIR DAVID (to MRS. GRIFFITH).

On that chair Roland was to have sat, and look! the nasty 'Becca! (*Turns to Rioters.*) You knot of rascals and villains, you shall repent this insolence to a man of my dignity and station.

REBECCA (*without raising her eyes*).

Tink you by this tone to assert your tignity and station? Hur pity you, sir!  
Ha! This *is* wine!

SIR DAVID.

Passion o' me! 'T was not provided for you to swig.

REBECCA.

A palate comes by nature, Sir Taffy. (*Drinks.*) Hur has ta modest gift of toping ithout care of ta crapes or fintages, or from what merchants, look you. My little 'enches, trink! Ye are wont to "sweat in the eye of Phœbus," now taste the sun in your wine!

PADDY.

If you be too busy, I will carve for myself, for, by St. Patrick! the pie bates banagher.

*(Reaches the pie to himself, and eats from the dish.)*

1ST REBECCAITE.

Hur cannot muke hur tinner for want of toasted cheese, do you see.

*(Loud cries of toasted cheese! toasted cheese!)*

REBECCA.

A fengeance shake thee, Sir Taffy! Send for ta toasted cheese.

SIR DAVID.

By the manes of Cadwallader! I'll see you all hanged first.

LADY NINNYHAM.

For heaven's sake! some one fly with that cheese to the oven.

*(Exit Servant with cheese from the sideboard.)*

SIR DAVID.

Stop! My Stilton! I'm in a fume!

LADY NINNYHAM.

There is no remedy, Sir David.

MRS. GRIFFITH *(aside)*.

Oh, my poor heart! If the police should now arrive, or Courtall! I'd give worlds to speak to Roland, but dare not be seen approach him.

REBECCA.

'Tis toasted cheese, or hur will take a course!

PADDY.

Open your persecuted throats, and agitate! that's the way we do it in Ireland. Och! she's the ancient ould place, after all; and but for the tyranny and hatred of England, there's no spot on the globe would bear any comparison. So, here's long life and equal rights to Green Erin! and her own parliament house back again to her!

*(Renewed cries of toasted cheese.)*

*(In the midst of the clamour, the Cook rushes in with toasted cheese.)*

COOK.

'T IS HERE ! 'T IS HERE !

REBECCAITES *(dividing the cheese)*.

Tis is rare ! tis is telicate ! tis is telicious !

SIR DAVID *(with bitter rage)*.

Villains and slaves ! Is there aught else in my larder you would be pleased to order ?

REBECCA.

Tere is one ting more, Sir Taffy, mark you.

SIR DAVID.

Name ! and may it choke ye !

REBECCA *(in a commanding voice)*,

*Another tish of toasted cheese !*

SIR DAVID.

This affront shall be dearly answered. Not a pauper for a dozen miles but shall be looked after. The laws be thanked ! there's the tread-mill for 'em. They are all banded together with you and your crew. You sing to one tune, ye scum, dross, and vermin of the land ! and that's rebellion.

REBECCA.

If all ta umble people that have no food pe sent to ta tread-mill, you must 'iden your jails, do you see.

How can you, Sir Taffy, 'ith a hardened face gloat on the prospect of your fellow-creatures' miseries ?

SIR DAVID.

'T is the lot they were born to. You, mean herd, are my servants, debtors, and do but suffer in my fit severity.

REBECCA.

Suffer? Is poferty a crime?

SIR DAVID.

Odds precious! So the age counts it, and would frown it from the earth.

REBECCA.

Got help them tat think so! and add to ta number of ta firtuous, if poferty be a crime!

You teem what you call the mean herd a purten of the earth, of your estates; and so you sits at sessions, to frame or twist laws to trap and hunt them down.

SIR DAVID.

Odds blood! It sets my happiness off—and now 'tis necessary to my revenge on your abettors.

REBECCA.

Wherefore seek a triumph o'er the abject creatures here, instead of making them, as Heaven designed, your crown and triumph hereafter? Why authorize ta Englishman Courtall, for his profits and delights, to encroach on their privilege of commonage—to seize on their goods—turn their 'ives out of toors—force their 'ittle ones to perish in a ouse (misnamed) of industry, and, by tyranny and wrong, extort the holdings, the gardens, and the mean furniture of those who, in the eye of Heaven, are your brethren? How can you answer when it shall be inquired of you,—“where is the flock which I have given you, the beautiful flock?”

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! 'Becca, you would not talk me into a belief, that the poorest of the poor are as good as related to Sir David Ninnyham . . . are brethren of the descendant of Cadwallader?

REBECCA (*in a voice of deep feeling*).

And have you inteed no touch of sympathies for the poorest poor? Own you no kindred with a 'urld where on every side want and sorrow are to be met with? Look inward, Sir Taffy, and read your human natures petter; tisclaim not the heart in your bosom,—man is tear to man!

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! What's the matter with me? (*After a pause.*) Would my sympathy put you down, you and your lawless followers? Would it rebuild the toll-houses—restore the turnpike-gates? Would it deliver us . .

REBECCA.

It would from your plindness of heart, by opening your eyes to the apominations of those erections—and for Repecca—just say the upland commons shall be left to the peasantry, and hur tispands hur taughters on the instant for ever.

SIR DAVID.

Odds zooks! a bargain! On that condition Pennallen go disparked till doomsday. It has a face.

REBECCA (*with emotion*).

Like an angel! Sir Ninnyham. To make the poor your peadsmen, . . at teir meals, . . at eve, and morn, teir tanks, next Heaven, to be paid to your forbearance.

SIR DAVID.

By the blood of Cadwallader! Rebecca touches me; she has almost brought tears into my eyes; I profess she has.

REBECCA.

The arch of mercy lacks ta last key-stone. Would you pe plessed py ta ole neighbourhood, sign this paper recommending your tenants and tependants to fote for whom they tink proper at elections and so forth, look you.

SIR DAVID.

Perish me! I am easily persuaded in the way of reason: a little of it goes a great way with me—but . .

(*Looks towards* LADY NINNYHAM.)

REBECCA.

Let hur try persuasions, look you, on your coot Lady. (REBECCA *approaches* LADY NINNYHAM, and in a low voice *apart*.) Call ta mind ta flaw in your pedigree, what passed between you and your papa, ta tailor!

LADY NINNYHAM (*aside*).

Rebecca knows too much for me to incense him. (To SIR DAVID.) Perhaps, dnck, you had better yield, or we shall have the house burnt over our heads.

SIR DAVID.

Odds zooks! Not for *that*, Lady Ninnyham, but,—(Aside to LADY NINNYHAM.) 'twixt you and me, since there is no soul to contest with me the borough, my signing cannot matter a rush. (Turns to REBECCA.) 'Becca, do you and your daughters disperse, our dispute's at an end: I give it over; and whoever be

returned for Pennallen, I am silent,—not a word, not a syllable. Mum for me! (*Takes the paper.*) Lead 's as good as ink any day. (*Having signed the paper.*) There 's authority for everybody under my subjection to vote as everybody pleases.

(REBECCA *having received back the paper, turns to the insurgents.*)

REBECCA.

My children—our association is ended. (*Sensation.*)

REBECCAITES.

Leave us to drag on our lives as before? Tesert us in our starving misery—our sufferings more than mortal!

REBECCA.

For what cause, tink you, did hur lead, counsel, and command you? For fames?—for honours? No laurel springs for ta incendiary—no triumph waits ta fictures of ta rebel, but, in their stead, curses! tangers! ta gibbet! tisgrace! and hell!

(*Sensation.*)

REBECCAITES.

What is 'Becca preaching? New readings and tawkings, do you see!

REBECCA.

Not for imaginations, look you, has hur acted, as if you were Heaven's outcasts; but for the sake of our common nature. Humanity, and not ambition was 'Becca's incentive.

PADDY.

Och, by the saints! Was it not the political rights of Ould Britain ye were agitating?

REBECCA.

Political rights? Air bubbles all!

(*Great sensation. Murmur of reprehension and noise.*)

What care terepid atomies in ta last stage of tepilities? What care pantlings in leading strings? — Omens in labours, or at ta town-lying, or ta tiseased, the tisabled and infirm. What care *the breadless* for political rights? They ask warm food and clothing for themselves; for their husbands and sons, a day's fair pay for a hard day's labour. They want no *humbug* liberties; only the license to fetch their latest breaths in the eye of nature.

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! What ails me? My heart is so full, it runs over at my eyes.

REBECCA.

Wherefore hur has stood up at all risks, to fight a high pattle for you, as withering weeds fixed to the rock of custom, in such profound abyss, that scarce a ruffle from the swelling waves of human vicissitude can reach ye where ye float, for good or evil; and hur hath voiced abroad the sacred principle that, however ye may stagnate far, *far* beneath the alleviation of sunshine, or the desolation of storm, ye are not to be plucked up by the roots, before it be God's will to cast ye on the shore of eternity.

SIR DAVID.

Now if I would not give a hundred pounds that a certain triumvirate heard Rebecca.

REBECCAITES.

Then why forsake us now?



REBECCA.

Sir Taffy be your leader. He has promised kindness, justice, and restitutions, do you see. Rebecca's occupation 's gone.

SIR DAVID (*with a bow*).

Odds boddikins, 'Becca! You are a gentleman!

REBECCAITES.

Oh, spiritless! Where are your plans?

REBECCA.

What Rebecca tares do, who tares question? Hear hur last commands. No; hur advises you all as a parent, look you. Go home! Disperse! If in this world you can catch at a single glimpse of comfort, cease to war with civilized society. The public press of England affords that glimpse. If one spark of hope lurks in your bosoms, fly this dreadful confederacy. The repentance of ta neighbouring squires should inspire that spark; yea, blow it to a flame. Then take Rebecca's counsel—retreat while it is yet time!

REBECCAITES.

We will, we warrant you, and keep Rebecca's commands, and pless her for them, mind you.

REBECCA.

Continue still your loves.

(REBECCA *takes the hands of the band, raising her eyes to heaven.*)

Lost sheep, restored! Hardships endure for a night; but have courage, there is another world!

[*Exeunt Rebeccaites.*]

Sir Taffy henceforward show ta heavens more just, and Rebecca's mission will have made manifest the time's tisease; and so, coot days to you all!

(*To MRS. GRIFFITH, apart.*)

The curry, my lovely, is capital. Stay your appetite with a pinch and a glass of water.

MRS GRIFFITH (*in trepidation*).

Go, go!

[*Exit REBECCA.*]

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! A good joke! I can't but laugh, however. Why don't you all laugh? (*He forces a laugh.*) Ha! ha! ha! We look so like fools! By the blood of Brute! If I arn't half ready to hang myself!

LADY NINNYHAM (*to MRS. GRIFFITH*).

How distressed I feel on your account, Mrs. Griffith! I hope Rebecca did not alarm you?

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Her presence made me a little nervous; but since we are rid of the creature, I am rapidly recovering.

*Enter ROLAND.*

LADY NINNYHAM (*aside*).

Roland! Undone, if Courtall . . .

ROLAND.

An impudence worth a chronicle! that Rebecca . . .

LADY NINNYHAM.

Has terrified dear Mrs. Griffith.

ROLAND.

Audacious! Bear up, that's my pretty polly!

SIR DAVID.

Odds precious! Would you had come sooner!

ROLAND.

"Two suns keep not their motion in one sphere."

SIR DAVID.

However, I have bit 'Becca's head off. Such a composition! To be sure my tenantry are to judge for themselves on all political points, and act as they think fit.

ROLAND.

Tell me something I may believe! Oh, worthy descendant of your monster-subduing ancestor! I am overcome with joy! Transport! Ha! ha! ha!

*(He bursts into a violent fit of laughter as if hysterical and tottering.)*

*(In a faint voice.)*

By-and-by, I'll come again to you.

*(Sinks into a chair, seemingly insensible.)*

MRS. GRIFFITH *bending over him with solicitude.*

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! Roland Griffith! Why what the devil? Bear up, man! Dear! dear! dear!

*Enter COURTALL with Burgesses and Crowd.*

COURTALL (*aside*).

Now I have thee, Roland! Isidore has kept her word.

Your tenants are here, Sir David, to honour your birthday, by promising their suffrages at the ensuing election.

SIR DAVID (*to Burgesses*).

I shall be your debtor. You are to learn, however, that all on my estates may do their pleasure in such cases.

COURTALL.

What time of the moon is it?

BURGESSES.

Tat's prave look you! And Squire Ap Griffith was to make ostentations.

COURTALL.

Humph! Lo! Where he lies inebriate!

(*Points to ROLAND.*)

1ST BURGESS.

Trunk-tead, or tead-trunk!

2ND BURGESS.

The wrongs of Welchmans, do you see, must go untold in parliaments. The Almighty has rejected the voice of Griffith—tegenerate descendant of ta kings of Wales!

3RD BURGESS.

We are all sentlemans, and not to be treated with contemptuous silence, mark you. If you want anything of us, ask for it, Ap Griffith.

COURTALL (*with a sneer*).

And I 'll be the first to record my vote in your favour,  
*upon my honour!*

ROLAND (*starting up*).

“ I 'll take the ghost's word for a thousand ! ”

COURTALL.

A miracle, *upon my honour!*

ROLAND.

Thou art a greater, that lookest as thou hadst been  
boiled anew in Medea's kettle.

(*To Burgesses after a pause.*)

Did you suppose the lion slept because he ceased to  
roar?

(*Takes papers out of his pocket.*)

Behold documents given under the hand of most of the  
neighbouring landowners, acknowledging your right as  
British freemen, to vote for whom you will. This is a  
copy of the last proclamation from Rebecca, who, like the  
lightning, having cleared the vapours that deform our  
moral atmosphere, like the lightning has vanished from  
us. **BURGESSES OF PENNALLLEN!** We are no longer in  
the hands of fortune. I have accomplished what ye dared  
scarcely dream of. Nothing is wanting but your suf-  
frages!

BURGESSES.

And you shall have tem. Hurrah for Roland Ap  
Griffith for ever!

2ND BURGESS.

But what is Ap Griffith's politics look ye now?

ROLAND.

The politics of above,—to be the stay of the fallen and friendless of their kind—the advocate of crushed and broken natures . . . I go to parliament as *the poor man's member!*

*(Loud acclamations—he walks aside.)*

SIR DAVID.

Odds blood! Devices! Cadwallader was never done. How came *I* then to be done? My lady come and help me to argue with Roland.

LADY NINNYHAM (*to* ROLAND).

Sir, I find you are—

ROLAND.

I find, too, what you are, my lady.

LADY NINNYHAM.

What am I, sir? What am I?

ROLAND.

Why you are angry, my dear Lady Ninnyham.

(SIR DAVID and LADY NINNYHAM *follow* ROLAND.  
COURTALL *approaches the door*: MRS. GRIFFITH  
*after him.*)

MRS. GRIFFITH.

You would not? . . .

COURTALL (*interrupting*).

Shall I call in the police to apprehend Rebecca?

MRS. GRIFFITH.

Act so traitorous a part.

COURTALL (*taking her hand*).

That depends on you. Bless me in my wishes and . . .

MRS. GRIFFITH (*withdrawing her hand*).

Forbear! Hell cannot express thee!

COURTALL (*his hand on the handle of the door*).

Dearest and best of women! If you smile not on my passion, I must perform my duty as a magistrate. (*Pauses.*) Now? (*Pauses.*) Consent, or I am—

MRS. GRIFFITH.

A thing, that equal with the devil I scorn.

COURTALL.

(*Throws open the door violently, then in a loud voice.*)

Now then within there, with your prisoner!

*Enter police with PADDY in custody.*

SIR DAVID.

Odds zounds! everything topsy turvy?

COURTALL.

How dared you, Paddy, join in demolishing the dinner of Sir David?

PADDY.

'T was a blunder faith, but as natural a one as if I had made it on purpose. An your worship will overlook it, I 'll tell you a secret or two of Rebecca.

COURTALL.

Approach! Speak out! You 'll all be astonished, upon my honour!

(PADDY, who had approached COURTALL, suddenly claps a pitch plaster on his mouth, and pinions him.)

PADDY.

You are astonished, I guess.

ROLAND.

A word with our friend Courtall. I should be sorry my servant Paddy came to harm.

(ROLAND advances to the foot-lights, forcing COURTALL along with him, struggling and gesticulating to no purpose.)

ROLAND.

You are cursedly out in your politics, you moving mummy, whom a single touch throws into agonies! Though padded and be-Titianed, as if you were that lady's younger brother, I have evidence here (*produces letters*) that . . .

(COURTALL shows symptoms of agitation).

Suppose we compound? Let Rebecca preserve her incognito, and I'll never expose your having stepped over that ungracious line of division that marks out your grand climacteric.

(COURTALL frowns and stamps: then, after a pause, signifies by an inclination of the head his assent to ROLAND's proposition.)

ROLAND.

I knew we should come to terms. Off with your muzzle, and send those fellows hence (*points to the police*).

(COURTALL removes the pitch-plaster.)



COURTALL.

To spoil my face at that rate!

(*Suddenly, in a paroxysm of wrath, approaching* LADY NINNYHAM.)

Serpent! thou hast given those letters to Ap Griffith. Take the consequence! Though it be torture past torture for my advanced age to be discovered to the world, let Roland divulge the truth, and when he has done his worst *this* be my revenge. He, Roland Ap Griffith, is . . .

PADDY (*interrupting*).

Och! how he foams at the mouth. Dost know of any mad doctor hard by to bind him hand and foot? It's a dark room, and bread and water may serve to bring the squire to his senses again.

COURTALL.

That man is Rebecca! I have abundance of proof—My daughter's evidence, and my own, and——

ROLAND (*breaking in*).

*His daughter!* Ay, ay, ay, 't is indeed so. He's perfectly distracted. Why, Courtall, I am no more Rebecca, than thyself art the identical tailor Snip, who received an enormous bribe from the French directory, to preach treason at spouting clubs in London, and fill the minds of the lower orders with Gallic principles and sans culottery.

COURTALL (*starting*).

(*In a low voice to* ROLAND.)

What meanest thou?

ROLAND (*aside*).

You may as well put your passion in your pocket. I have a hank upon you—Do you know this handwriting?

(*Shows letters.*)

COURTALL.

My head aches consumedly. How came you by them?

ROLAND.

They must have got mingled with certain family documents which I, unobserved by Lady Ninnyham, filched from where you had just laid them, in my summer house.

COURTALL.

I am undone!

PADDY.

Plase give me that clane bit of a letter to send home to my grandmother.

ROLAND (*aside to COURTALL*).

To close your mouth again, gag you, sir, for ever! I can have you tried for your life—besides, I have proof of your having cozened Sir David, and of a certain lethargic . . . I overheard!

COURTALL.

Pray, *l'entente cordiale*? but I can't talk, *upon my honour*!

ROLAND (*aside*).

*The oath of a tailor!* (*Turns to SIR DAVID.*) Courtall has made the notable discovery, that I am no more Rebecca than is Lady Ninnyham the daughter he babbled of.

SIR DAVID.

Odds blood! She is of the lineage of Cadwallader. I doubt if Courtall ever had a grandfather! ha! ha! ha!

MRS. GRIFFITH (*to ROLAND*).

Oh, Roland! my heart has been in my mouth for the last half hour.

ROLAND.

Prithee let it to thy lips, *pour faire bonne bouche*, that I may kiss it. (*Kisses her.*)

COURTALL (*to Police*).

Get ye all gone! There is no need—no need now.

[*Exeunt Police.*]

LADY NINNYHAM.

I hope, you 'll forgive me, papa.

COURTALL (*sharply*).

Not if you call me by such a puling word. Pa! pa! pa! Rickets and smallpox! I am no family man, *upon my honour!*

SIR DAVID.

Egad! I smell a second repast, piping hot, and hope these gents that were to have been my constituents . . .

PADDY.

But now are his honour's. Devil doubt they'll stay dinner.

SIR DAVID.

Odds buds! A free and easy age; and to give thee thy due, Roland Griffith, thou art the most free and easy fellow in it.

ROLAND.

We live, thank God! in a free and easy country, where no spot can be long polluted by the slime of the serpent, who was the first rebel, save through the selfish supineness of the rich. The obligations of property are correlative with its rights; they cannot be divorced; and its first duty is to cherish

“ England’s bold peasantry, their country’s pride,  
Who, once destroyed, can never be supplied.”

*(The curtain drops.)*

END OF REBECCA AND HER DAUGHTERS.



**PHILIP BASIL ;**

**OR,**

**A POET'S FATE.**

**A TRAGEDY FOR THE TIMES.**

**In Five Acts.**

**RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED**

**TO**

**THE AUTHOR OF "ION."**

"Give unto me, made lowly wise,  
The spirit of self-sacrifice."

WORDSWORTH.

---

Poor, good, great man ! thou hast treasures, Love and Light,  
And calm thoughts, regular as infants' breath :  
Friendless, thou hast friends, more sure than day and night ;—  
Thyself—thy Maker—and the angel, Death.

---

"It is an error worse than heresie to adore these complimentary and circumstantial pieces of felicity, and undervalue those perfections and essential points of happiness wherein we resemble our Maker. To wiser desires it is satisfaction enough to deserve, though not to enjoy, the favours of Fortune ; *let Providence provide for fools*. 'Tis not partiality, but equity in God, who deals with us but as our natural parents ; those that are enriched with higher donatives he leaves to their deserts ; but pieces out the defect of those of weaker merits by an excess in the vulgar parts of felicity."

SIR THOMAS BROWN, *Religio Medici*.

## Characters.

EARL LEWIS.

WALSINGHAM . . . . . { *A blind and aged Indian merchant,  
incalculably rich.*

HORACE . . . . . *In love with ROSETTA.*

PHILIP BASIL . . . . . *A poor poet.*

BLIGH . . . . . { *Lodging in the same house with  
BASIL: un mauvais sujet.*

POLICEMEN, TURNKEY, SERVANTS, ATTENDANTS, OFFICERS,  
&c. &c.

THE COUNTESS LEWIS . . . HORACE's Sister.

ROSETTA . . . . . *Supposed Daughter of BASIL.*

MRS. BLIGH.

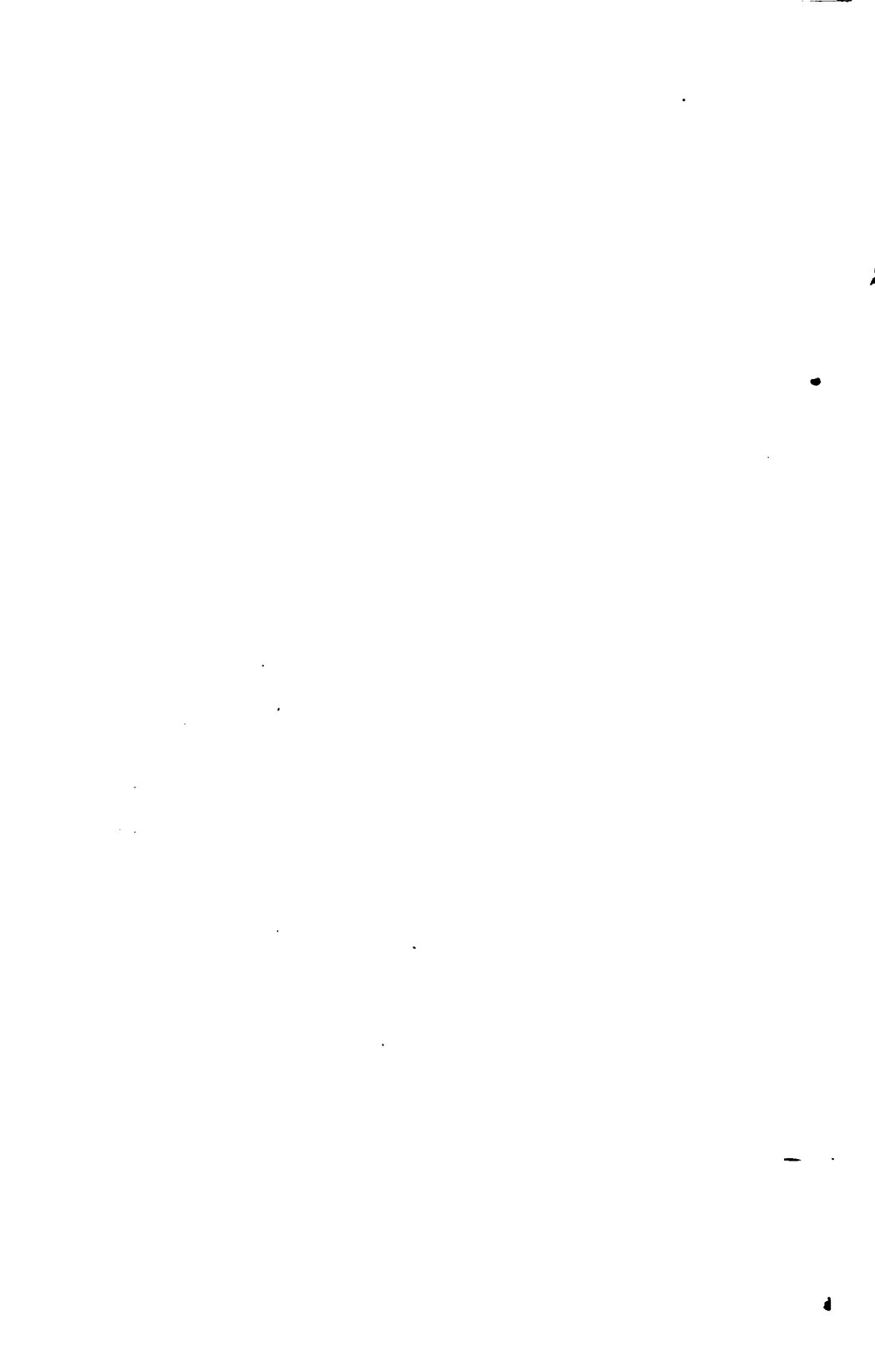
NURSE.



TIME . . . . . 1846.

SCENE . . . . . *London.*





# PHILIP BASIL ;

OR,

A POET'S FATE.

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## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

*A mean chamber : BLIGH's apartment.*

BLIGH and MRS. BLIGH.

BLIGH *in the act of taking down a pistol which hangs over the mantelpiece.*

MRS. BLIGH.

Bligh, 't is my belief you purpose returning to your old courses. You make me most wretched.

BLIGH.

Not so for the world.

MRS. BLIGH.

I pray you then, husband, give me that pistol.

BLIGH.

'T is only to hold up *in terrorem*.

MRS. BLIGH.

You shall not leave the house with it.

BLIGH.

Speak lower, or you will disturb our benefactor at his studies.

MRS. BLIGH.

Mr. Basil shall ask it of you. I will call him.

BLIGH.

You are frantic. Stay! I am overruled.

MRS. BLIGH.

'T is only a month ago that, upon the highway, you levelled that very instrument at *him*,—even at Basil; notwithstanding that at intervals, for many years past, you had exchanged words of courtesy with him.

BLIGH.

I was mad! betrayed! tempted! Be still!

MRS. BLIGH.

Yes, you must have been actuated by some deeper motive than aught his purse could furnish; for well you knew him to be poor.

I will recount

Your crime and danger, and his noble kindness,  
Since you forget.

BLIGH.

Not I. I prithee, spare me

The ready tale.

MRS. BLIGH.

He closed : upon yourself  
Turned the arrested tube ; with pendent eye,  
And arm new raised, hung o'er you. Then your plea  
Of penury, sick wife, and dying child,  
Entered his human hearing. He your wants  
Relieved ; and *me* from an impending grave  
Rerieved, as *you* from justice ; nay, provided  
From out his scanty means . . .

Sweet Will, that image  
So perfect, of God's love . . . our loadstar . . .

BLIGH (*with deep emotion*).

Hush ?

MRS. BLIGH.

With decent burial.

BLIGH.

You know I am grateful.

MRS. BLIGH.

You owe to him your remitted life ; and yet again . . .

BLIGH.

We'll starve. There, take the toy you clamour about.

(*Gives her the pistol.*)

MRS. BLIGH (*replacing the pistol over the mantelshelf*).  
From his lonely attic you've roused dear Mr. Basil.

BLIGH.

I roused ? Good Lord !

MRS. BLIGH.

His step ! his voice !

*(She goes to the door, and in a louder tone.)*

Pray pardon us this uproar.

We are ashamed ! . . . Nothing of consequence.

*(Returns.)*

Gentle as ever !

Not for long, alas !

The winds sing through his bones : but *his* the nature,  
That, conquering sense, doth up to spirit work,  
And God makes angels of.

BLIGH.

Ay, in heaven ; but below, our fellow-lodger is nothing  
but a poet, and so gets little to chew besides bitter  
laurel.

MRS. BLIGH.

Which is sweet in digestion to such fine erected minds  
as that Mr. Basil owns.

BLIGH.

I never, like him, far into the night spent time in  
musings, and yet am as little beholden to fortune as  
though I too were disqualified with genius.

MRS. BLIGH.

So, because our circumstances are narrow, you persuade  
yourself we are starving. For shame, Bligh !

BLIGH.

Rats drink water ; I'd compound a more sparkling  
vintage.

MRS BLIGH.

Think upon Mr. Basil, who compounds  
But medicine for a train of claimant poor,  
Less indigent than himself.

BLIGH.

Reach me those deeds, wife.

*Enter Footman.*

SERVANT.

Bligh, how dost ?

(*Gives a letter to BLIGH, who reads it apart.*)

From his lordship.

MRS. BLIGH (*to Servant*).

Miss Basil, is she well ?

SERVANT.

So, so. Our countess, though she is married must retain the humble companion of her maidenhood, forsooth ; for Mr. Walsingham, who holds the purse, insists upon it.

BLIGH (*advancing*).

My respects, and inform your lord I follow you.

SERVANT (*to MRS. BLIGH*).

Old men must die one day, Earl Lewis trusts.

(*To BLIGH.*)

Thou must come incontinently.

BLIGH.

I come ! I come !

SERVANT.

Good morning, people.

[*Exit Footman.*]

MRS. BLIGH.

Earl Lewis! Do not go. Though he be noble.  
'Tis not in *soul*, like Basil; who had never  
Mated with one, half wild at times, for wealth.

BLIGH.

Old Walsingham, close and sullen, thinks as ill of the Earl as he does of every body else. However, his hoards in bonds and securities arithmetic cannot number, which, doubtless, the Countess Lewis, unless she die before the nabob,—an event, by-the-by, not unlikely,—will, at her grandfather's decease, share with her brother Horace. (*Aside.*) I guess his lordship's ready with a draft; but, thank Heaven! I was frustrated of my purpose.

MRS. BLIGH.

What's that you mutter?

BLIGH.

I say his lordship's communication may prove more profitable than engrossing.

MRS. BLIGH.

The slave of impulse still! Alas! for ever!

[*Exeunt.*]

---

## SCENE II.

*A handsome apartment.*

ROSETTA and HORACE.

ROSETTA.

It were too rash, dear Horace! I'm ashamed  
My sire should learn . . .

HORACE.

Nay, wherefore hark me back?  
There is no error in our love. Forthwith,  
With Mr. Walsingham's countenance, I will ask  
Your father's sanction.

ROSETTA.

Little Basil recks  
The opulence your grandsire glories in.  
The link that binds my father to his kind  
Being common hopes of immortality;  
Which not the accident of pelf or birth,  
The adventitious gauds of bloated fortune,  
Nor barest exigence in pauper prison,  
Nor intellectual diversity,  
Nor yet hard selfishness, mean pride, low vice,  
Can snap, or weaken . . .

All alike belong  
To the human family for which Christ died.

HORACE.

Still he is poor.



ROSETTA.

If the low want of hunger,  
 Abortive hopes, the dunce's calumny,  
 Ruffled his peace, ambitious of a name  
 Ere the tomb silence rivalry, he had never  
 Set up his rest among a stack of chimneys,  
 Working in self-reliance, and with strength  
 Of all enduring temper, in a country,  
 That, like a vip'rous mercenary mother,  
 Doth Genius' rights inappropriate, and eat,  
 Ungratefully, her brightest offspring up!

HORACE.

You speak with feeling.

ROSETTA (*warmly*).

"Poor," didst say? Shame! shame!  
 That men, like Basil, should meet dark-brow'd poverty!  
 'Tis England's stigma; but an heritage  
 Prouder than thine,—for he direct from Heaven  
 Hath patent of nobility, . . the flame  
 Lit in his heart.

HORACE.

All hearts that love are equal.

ROSETTA.

Your prospects will not dazzle.

Being endowed

With happiness in those essential points  
 Wherein his Maker is perfect, fortune's favours,  
 Piecing out their defects who are clogged with brains  
 That still with earth negotiate, or nothing,—  
 He values at their worth . . . *the trash of bankrupts!*

HORACE.

So proud, your sire, Rosetta?

ROSETTA.

Proud? No, placid

As his days flowed through blessings.

Mild you'll find him

As sleeping infancy, whose smiles bespeak

Glimpses of heaven.

He knows the height of grandeur

Less nigh to heaven's perfection may be raised

Than lowly goodness.

HORACE.

Doubt not prosperous issue.

ROSETTA.

God speed! Bring back . . .

HORACE.

Deep joy to last our lives.

ROSETTA.

Or what will blight them, Horace!

HORACE.

Nay! Adieu!

[*Exit* HORACE.]

*Enter the* COUNTESS (*her hair dishevelled—in agitation*).

COUNTESS.

Who is here? Your handkerchief: my eyes are blind.

Just wipe my brows. Thanks! thanks!

ROSETTA.

Dear Isabel,

How your head burns!

COUNTESS.

My heart, that's worse!

There's some one

Hath ringed my heart with fire.

*(After a pause wildly.)*

Forth I wandered . .

ROSETTA.

Wandered, your ladyship?

COUNTESS.

Ay, with a thought

That madness must have given, to the church

Wherein I stood a hap . . hap . . ha! a countess!

The envied bride of Lewis!

ROSETTA.

Gracious heaven!

COUNTESS.

There child, I paused all breathless

To part away my entangled hair, which strayed

Like threads of fire into my eyes. I cast

Myself on the church-steps—no consciousness

Lit this dead heart,—and yet I wept.

ROSETTA.

Dear friend!

Exposed to public gaze . . the hollow ground

Yielding your pillow?

COUNTESS.

Fittier a grave!

So might I hide my griefs, not rest them there.

With that, from hence this phial;

*(Produces a phial from her reticule.)*

"Than be so,

Better be free at once!" I cried.

ROSETTA.

Kind heavens!

COUNTESS.

But then I swooned.

*(Holding up the phial.)* It flowed with poisoned stream!

ROSETTA.

Oh, gracious Providence! That thou art alive!

COUNTESS.

On waking in a mean and low-roofed chamber;  
Close piled with books and manuscripts . . . A head  
Of Milton crown'd the shelf . . . the man who dashed  
My hand aside, fixed, pensive-eyed, upon me  
A heaven-illuminated dignity of look.

ROSETTA *(eagerly.)*

Was he tall?

COUNTESS.

And pale.

ROSETTA (*eagerly*).

With lofty brow, blue eyes.  
And bald, but scarcely, where deep thoughts, and holy,  
Have antedated time?

(*The COUNTESS motions her head in token of acquiescence.*)

Then 't was my father !

COUNTESS.

Indeed ?

I learned from him, he had seized the phial,  
Mid loud unmannered scoffs of rabble near,  
Who must have rifled from my reticule  
A pocket book, the fatal cause of all !  
The same in tremor and mistake I had snatched . .

(*She breaks off.*)

(*Aside.*) Hush, Isabel ! Still thy soul !

(*Aloud.*) From that rude crowd  
He had rescued me.

Of death and after judgment,  
Until I trembled, he discoursed . . But swear  
Never to mention . . .

Left alone, I, headlong,  
Flight after flight, rushed forth into the street.

ROSETTA.

What fatal cause hath urged on suicide,  
Opposed to virtue ?

COUNTESS.

Virtue, say'st ? Alas !  
The sweet complacencies which virtue owns  
Bear not the front they did. 'T was once enough  
*The idea* of sin. But over me, poor worm !

That e'en might in a drop of water drown,  
Whole rivers take their course. A sea of grief  
Is life, wherein no anchor holds, and I  
Drive hopeless.

(*After a pause.*) But thou art curious methinks?

ROSETTA.

An artist, whose slight sketches first attracted,  
When I was else unknown, no testimony,  
Save by our parish pastor, you received me  
Into your grandsire's house, will call me sister,  
If Heaven consent—Then should I not feel anxious,  
Knowing how feeble is your health, your nature  
How sensitive!

COUNTESS (*ruminating*).

Less sin were self-destruction . . .

ROSETTA (*taking her hand tenderly*).

What misbelieve you greater?

COUNTESS.

I engage  
Not to let slip my griefs, you uninformed  
Of the dread source of . . . (*Breaks off terrified.*)  
Hear that footstep!

EARL LEWIS (*without*).

Tell

Your lady to descend.

(*COUNTESS gives a faint scream.*)

ROSETTA.

Your eye balls strain.

Is it your lord who? . . .

*(After a pause.)*

If you still keep silence

I shall think you are gone distraught.

COUNTESS *(in a fearful tone)*.

It is my lord.

There, I am not distraught. I have broken silence!

*Enter* EARL LEWIS.

*(The COUNTESS in terror averts her face.)*

THE EARL.

Thou art here.

Why turn aside that striking visage?

If thou wouldst plume thy charms, with 'tentive watch  
Steal from thy husband's eye the sign to bring  
Money to his coffers. Ha!

COUNTESS *(interrupting in a trembling voice)*.

My lord, Miss Basil.

THE EARL *(to ROSETTA)*.

I cry you mercy, madam. How is your charge?

And *you*, in his last codicil?

*(Sneeringly.)* Some conscience!

ROSETTA.

Dear Isabel, pray excuse me.

COUNTESS *(faintly)*.

I'd not lose

Your company, Rosetta . . .

*[Exit* ROSETTA.

EARL LEWIS (*listening*).

Step of one

I have bidden.

(*Fiercely.*) To your room! I'll summon you  
Anon. Hence! wing thee from my sight!

COUNTESS (*apart*).

I'll bide

This dream but till oppression from my brain

Tear out the seat of sense . . . of memory.

And then . . . (*pauses.*)

And then, the dark hereafter open!

[*Exit* COUNTESS.

EARL LEWIS (*alone*).

In vain she'd struggle in the toils enthrall her,  
Spread by her own weak act, on which, by chance  
Detected, I have clutched my hold.

*Enter* BLIGH.

BLIGH.

By your lordship's commands . . .

EARL LEWIS.

Bligh, thou hast ever approved thee skilful and bold.

BLIGH.

I would add *secret*, my lord, but you might fancy, I have  
bribed a fool to be my herald. What service shall I have  
the honour to render?

EARL LEWIS.

How have you progressed in that I erewhiles set you  
upon?

Is your work achieved?



BLIGH.

I'll not affect misapprehension, my lord; but why should the removal of the man you described be valued at so high a price?

EARL LEWIS.

List to a brief recital, and then guess.

Old Walsingham, our grandsire here, had issue  
By his first wife, a girl, and, so 't is rumoured,  
Likewise a boy,—of whom anon. He chose  
His second spouse for beauty, save the mark!  
Some rural lass, it seems, not half his age.  
In a few months she left his house, eloped  
With a gay foreigner . . . so runs the version  
That I have heard . . . But no one knows the truth.  
Then, Mr. Walsingham embarked for India,  
Where soon his daughter Jane was married, who,  
Having given birth to Isabel and Horace,  
Died in their infancy.

Time passed: he had trebled  
His ample patrimony, when—his sight  
Failing—he sought his native land; and I,  
In ignorance of this lost heir, espoused  
Isabel, his grandchild.

BLIGH.

"Lost!" How lost, my lord?

EARL LEWIS.

Ere Walsingham left England, his son  
Absconded . . . 'Tis an interdicted subject  
With the old man . . . but I have gleaned this much  
From other sources.

He the fugitive whom  
I had pitched on you to trace for me, and . . .

BLIGH.

Murder !

*(Aside.)* The son of the wealthy Walsingham !*(Aloud.)* My lord,

But to what end ?

EARL LEWIS.

There are entailed upon him

Whole hamlets, large as towns—immense estates !

So on his death I build my hopes of fortune.

BLIGH.

A grave's but a rotten foundation. You said, he  
changed his name !.

EARL LEWIS.

He sunk his patronymic ; *that* is certain.

But my informant, now in India,

Omits to state what alias he adopted.

BLIGH.

Ay, but he lived with an only daughter quite retired . .

EARL LEWIS.

As I certified you.

BLIGH.

And you added, he was well known some time since as  
a contributor to certain monthlies, under the signature  
of *Ανδρεία*.

EARL LEWIS.

So I understood.

BLIGH.

And had not dropped his Christian name, which is  
Philip.

EARL LEWIS.

You hinted, that you knew the whereabouts of some such party.

Hast searched him out? Say thou hast earned the reward, I will crown thy hope to its o'erflowing height.

BLIGH (*with deep feeling*).

I have not!

(*Aside.*) God be praised! The preventing hand of God!

EARL LEWIS.

That's bad. Is the world dumb on his fate?  
What, have thy thoughts concluded?

BLIGH (*after a pause drily*).

The same as your lordship's, erewhiles. He may be dead.

EARL LEWIS.

*He!* . . . you perceive my mind.

(*With piercing look and low tone.*)

The daughter likewise.

BLIGH.

To harm that exquisite piece of beautiful nature!

EARL LEWIS.

Is she so beautiful?

But understand me.

My pale wife's health is rapidly declining.

To see her by her sire, Walsingham

You'd deem the longer liver. Proved it so,

My contemplated wealth must lie entombed,

Stillborn, in her cold coffin, save I could

Resuscitate my prospects, by espousing

This daughter of the hereditary heir.  
Knew I her abode, I'd put the affair in train ;  
And, Isabel dead, after due courtship, doubt not,  
To wear another countess,—one whose claims  
I'll see the laws establish.

BLIGH (*aside, after a pause*).

Features and tongue obey me for one supple moment !  
(*Aloud.*) I rather think she hath also paid her dear  
breath.

EARL LEWIS.

Then you *did* know the party ? Hey, Bligh ?

BLIGH.

I recollect where lodged a poor author, signing An-  
drea ; indeed, shall ne'er forget when once . . .

EARL LEWIS.

Your words start back.

BLIGH.

'Tis now ten years since.

I had failed in obtaining a trifling pittance, long due  
to him. He heard me with a smile of resignation ; though  
a tear, which was unbidden, dimmed his eye, constantly  
bent upon the maid whom his love proclaimed to be his  
daughter, and who, as she replaced their frugal meal, re-  
marked in a quiet tone, " I am not at all hungry, father,  
and you will not eat *just now*."

Those touching words, my lord, still linger in my  
heart.

EARL LEWIS.

But his is cold, you tell me, and *hers* ?

BLIGH.

Hard earnings of the brow inadequate to procure a bare subsistence! What must they appear to a man of refinement, trained to the wide necessities of opulence!

EARL LEWIS.

Pshaw! How did they die?

Why not have said they were released, when I held out to you the guerdon of 1,000*l*.

BLIGH.

Why, I will not now vouch they are in their grave; but you can take it for gospel, unless I advise you otherwise. I never heard what illness laid them there.

I pray you, my lord, excuse me.

EARL LEWIS (*presenting a note*).

You have lightened my heart, and should my purse.

BLIGH (*shuddering*).

No, no, no, no!

[*Exit* BLIGH, *rapidly*.]

(EARL LEWIS *stands rooted, lost in thought*.)

EARL LEWIS (*after a long silence*).

Were growing time once ripened to my wish!

(*Pauses*.)

But Horace is the cloud that hangs between  
That wish and full effect. By testament  
Of Walsingham, her brother's share devolves  
On Isabel, he dying without issue.

(*Again pauses*.)

No deep device, when thousand pathways point  
To death's dark cave?

The engine works *his* ruin,

Were procreant with exhaustless wealth, for . . . whom ?  
Not me,—unless my countess shall survive  
Her grandsire ; and at her the very boughs  
Shake their sere leaves in triumph.

I must act !

[*Exit.*

---

SCENE III.

*BASIL's apartment : an attic : a few books on a shelf.  
A bust of Milton on the mantelpiece. A table, two  
chairs ; recess, &c. &c.*

BASIL (*alone*).

She is gone, and left no trace. I would I had learned  
Her name, to advise her friends.

I doubt her home,  
Through selfish blindness, or transferred affection,  
Is rank with man's injustice ; and she knows not  
How much she is blessed through suffering.

Oh ! may never  
Thou, whose heart owneth, save myself, no inmate,  
*My sister !*

Never may thy spirit, bright  
As sleeping sunbeam, suffer cloud of sorrow  
From bosom tyranny !

May no frost nip  
The vivid promise of thy virgin spring ?

When went there by a week, and I not catch

Her footfall near, like that of radiant fawn,  
Ere round my neck her restless arm of love  
Clung gladsome? What her absence now imports  
Troubles me like an omen.

To my task!

That, on the soul's invisible wings, ascending  
To purer ether, far above the mists  
That sadden o'er my solitude, my thoughts  
May sever from my griefs, and lose themselves  
'Mid semblances and visioned lights, that beam  
Like God's own eye upon the thinking heart.

*(He seats himself.)*

How mean this attic! Yet Heaven finds no odds  
'Twixt it and stately halls. At such due distance  
The hills and vales of all below lie even;  
And our whole sphere seems level as a point  
Which hath no sensible greatness. Little reck'd  
The Apostle, in the spirit steeped, as vessel  
Dropped in a sea of bliss, if he had been  
'Neath roof of Athens, or in caves of Judah  
Out of himself translated. So I fly  
All earthborn cares as sapless. Yet the words,  
I know not why, strike hollow, and my heart  
Is cold.

It is the dusky-pinion'd dream  
Which last night roused me; when, methought, a wolf  
Did from my bosom tear, with ravening tooth,  
A milk-white hind.

Love's links are strong, while breath . . .

*(Perceives a parchment-covered book on the floor, which  
he takes up.)*

What's here? A pocket-book!

The unhappy lady's.

In order to restore it, I'll make bold . . . .

Perchance her name, address: and then I'll warn . . .

*(As he is in the act of opening the pocket-book, a tap at the door is heard. Hastily reclasping it, he thrusts it into his pocket.)*

Enter child!

*Enter HORACE.*

BASIL *(starting back)*.

Sir, your pardon, and commands?

HORACE.

I speak to Mr. Basil?

*(BASIL bows.)*

I am brother

To the Countess Lewis, whose abode your daughter,  
Heart-winning guest, now graces.

BASIL *(coldly)*.

Sir, she's honoured.

HORACE.

I am right glad to seize this fair occasion  
For personal knowledge of a man, whose life,  
Albeit a poet, is his proudest laurel.

BASIL.

To what do I owe your courtesy!

HORACE.

Thy muse

Doth, to the attentive reader, thy choice spirit  
Fully unfold. Thyself, and history,  
Art not thine own so proper as thy country's.



BASIL.

When poesy bubbles up from a full spring,  
The bard writes out his heart.

(*After a pause.*) Can I my will  
Mould to your service?

HORACE.

When I named your daughter . .

BASIL (*starting*).

Daughter? Rosetta?

HORACE.

She is held most dear

By Mr. Walsingham; upon her arm,  
Creeping by light of her bright eye, he leans;—  
Œdipus, with his child Antigone.

BASIL (*affected, but suppressing his emotion*).

Is it so? You touch me. Sir, with classic eye  
You view life's thoroughfares.

Antigone

Guiding her rayless father! I could smile,  
But something in my throat . . . . .

(*Turns away in agitation.*)

HORACE.

By his command,  
And her consent, I'd match me in thy family.

BASIL (*aside*).

Strengthen my heart, great God! for I am weak,  
And do not hear aright.

(*Aloud with faltering voice.*) You named Rosetta?

HORACE.

I can aspire no higher.

BASIL (*apart*).

Still the brands,

My fiery trial, for Heaven's gracious purpose,  
I've borne, through strength transcending mine nor quailed,  
But *this* blast comes from the infernal forge,  
And my heart's cinders.

HORACE.

Wherefore at my suit

Such looks distracted?

BASIL (*apart*).

In the deeps of troubles,  
This life a blank, and grace eclipsed, hope cheered me.

HORACE.

A union with Miss Basil . . .

BASIL.

Sir, as soon

She shall contract with him who rules i' the air!

(*He moves away.*)

(*Apart.*) In suffering did this heart forget, or sick  
This brain forego, or ever in temptation  
Did pen or hand belie that shadowy hoping?  
The winds that sweep the earth, *they* make no earthquake,  
'T is that within its bosom! (*Turns to HORACE.*)

(*Aloud.*)

Without my knowledge, it became Rosetta  
Ill to approve your visit . . .

HORACE.

Oh! reject not,

For both our sakes . . .

BASIL.

Sir, in the fixed resolve  
Of a deliberate will, wherein there can be  
No room for change, or shadow like to change,  
I, on you both, if ye shall dare to dream  
More of this union, marrison and woe,  
Dread as remorse of conscience ever felt,  
Eternally denounce!

HORACE.

Oh, sir, no hope?

BASIL.

In your sense none, or earth  
Must cease to bear thee up.

HORACE,

Untuned my heart!

(*Aside.*)

But yet his child may touch the strings to harmony.  
Fathers are not their offsprings' fates, I take it.  
Sir, farewell!

[*Exit* HORACE.]

BASIL (*alone*).

Oh, power of grace! dart down one ray serene  
Upon yon sanguine cloud, or, ere it burst,  
Disperse it into vapour; while my soul,  
Long wrapped in secrecy, I straight unclasp  
To that poor, rich, blind being; and deliver  
My sister up unto her rightful parent,

Who loves, not knowing whom he loves.

This stroke,

May it prove a sparkle to be quenched with tears,  
And not the bolt of Heaven, long suffering,  
Incensed, at length, to hurl his hoarded judgments  
Right through the heart of innocence !

(*After a pause.*) I have

No option left . . . . .

*My mission must be sealed !*

[*Exit* BASIL.]

END OF ACT FIRST.

## A C T II.

## SCENE I.

*The grounds of EARL LEWIS' house, looking on St. James's Park. The Horse Guards or Westminster Abbey in the distance.*

EARL LEWIS and COUNTESS.

EARL LEWIS.

Reluctant hand  
To close with thine I yielded ; long revolved  
The ebb of my estate ere I could swallow  
My cure in such a shape. I gave *you* rank,  
But I, there being no cov'nants drawn between us . . .  
For what should the old Nabob with his hoards  
Unless redeem my lands? I say, *I* stand  
No richer in return ; save for my rights  
O'er thy precarious charms !

COUNTESS.

Upon the death . . . .  
His age admits short stay . . . . of . . .

THE EARL (*interrupting*).

He will live

After you rot ; the clothing of whose cheek,  
In snow and fire, can scarce outwear the wardrobe

Of a sick flower. Or should he not, how know I?  
There 's this fair spoken viper, who hath crawled  
Into his favour, and your brother Horace . . . (*he pauses*).  
We are from the point.

(*With piercing look: in a low hollow voice.*)

My present uses cry  
For . . . *Is it done?*

COUNTESS (*in a faint voice*).  
With thy injunction charged,  
I sought the chamber.

THE EARL.  
Good! So, reach me. Why  
Decline your conscious eyes?

COUNTESS.  
Though criminal;  
Fruitless my crime.

THE EARL.  
I 'll tell you what,  
This dirk,

(*draws forth a small dirk from his stick.*)

Since dipped in subtle wourrali\* its edge,  
With puncture slighter than an emmet's bite,  
Would kill ere aid could reach you, and the cause  
Be imputed natural.

---

\* The *wourrali*. A well known South American poison: any instrument dipped in it kills with a mere scratch.

COUNTESS (*trembling*).

Thy venom'd point  
Why *brandish*, when my own too thoughtless guilt  
Hath o'er me set thee, ruthless task master?

EARL LEWIS.

True!—

When at his bureau, pale, I once surprised thee,  
With palm that held thy grandsire's priceless gem,  
Thereon my spell I rested; thou becamest  
My tool, my instrument, to dig me treasure  
From the mine thou hadst rifled.

To constrain submission.

*I brandish but exposure,—Trenchant terror!*

COUNTESS.

'T was my first crime made me the abject wretch  
On whom thou tramplest. Since we spoke, my lord,

(*After a pause.*)

I alleged to Walsingham a lien foreclosed,  
To save me being compelled again . . . . .

EARL LEWIS.

You found him  
Of course close-fisted. But repeat his answer.

COUNTESS.

Infinite stores in each bequest I make  
Shall my last will discover. There Earl Lewis,  
Unless that your decease erase it thence,  
May see his title swell before his eyes.  
But till death strike a palsy through me, wealth,  
My age's weapon, shall not shrink in my grasp.

EARL LEWIS.

May death strike quick ! Dry up his rapid dregs !  
A wise man's risk in the saving clause he mentioned  
Were not for long.

COUNTESS.

May I retire ?

EARL LEWIS.

Expect

My further will.

(EARL LEWIS looks significantly with sinister glance at  
the COUNTESS.)

COUNTESS.

Beneath that look my breast  
Shivers with chilling horror.

EARL LEWIS.

Walsingham,  
His suite upon the ground floor terminates  
In his apartment issuing on the lawn ?  
Is 't still thus ?

COUNTESS.

There has been no change, my lord.

EARL LEWIS (*in a low voice*).Then in the heat (*pauses*).COUNTESS (*trembling aside*).

What next ? I am choked with terror !



EARL LEWIS (*with a slight start, then fiercely*).

Leave my thoughts elbow-room!

Stay! Just one word!

You've proved a hand attenuate as thine  
Can reach unvalued gems. If late you sought such,  
Pray where the splendid prize? So, artful dodge!  
You'll please supply my needs!

Be it done ere dark!

To-morrow brings new aims.

Enough is said.

(*After a pause.*)

Durst thou withstand my will?

(*He fixes his eyes upon her with a threatening look from which she shrinks.*)

COUNTESS.

Be pacified!

I must abet thee till my poor heart break;  
It ends in that at last.

[*Exit* COUNTESS.]

EARL LEWIS.

My infinite guerdon yet is in reversion!  
But not for long.

Were he to die this night?

My dirk empoisoned to that end: but Horace  
Were then untrapped.

Past compass of my brains,  
By some dark spirit led, here's Bligh with Horace!  
Blind tools of fate! what motive, got they think  
Of their free will, hath brought them hither?

Fortune!

Thy favours wait me.

(EARL LEWIS *retires behind a pillar, but presently advances.*)

*Enter HORACE and BLIGH.*

HORACE.

Herein I do but seek mine own,—the heart  
I prize more than my peace. My sword and mantle  
I'll leave with you. Be sure you hide the rope  
Until I am ready to descend.

BLIGH.

It may be ventured, I believe. But wherefore,  
When you might enter by the door? . . .

HORACE.

Do I prefer the casement?  
Bligh, content thee with my cash :  
My reasons I hold back.

BLIGH.

Folks will be physicked  
Just their own way, I find.

HORACE (*aside*).

She writes me word  
To shun her as the plague; but I shall scale  
Her room to die of such sweet illness; or,  
Unscathed, obtain consent to our elopement.

(*To BLIGH.*)

His lordship's not forthcoming, you perceive.  
*Remember, midnight!*

BLIGH.

Sir, I will run before time's wheel, rather than fail appointment at the nick.

[Exit HORACE.]

*(As BLIGH is following, EARL LEWIS comes forward, and touches him on the shoulder.)*

BLIGH.

Ha! my lord, your servant informed me I should find you here.

Hearing your club has ~~lost~~ its head controller, I have come to bespeak . . .

EARL LEWIS (*interrupting*).

How much below your merits!

BLIGH.

Troth, I'd gladly take some more thriving occupation,—be a policeman—they go bravest nowadays; or an actor,—his was a gainful profession, if half I have heard say be true.

EARL LEWIS.

I'll open an annuity to you,  
Transcending your most sanguine dream of wealth.

BLIGH.

Your lordship should not judge of a man's appetite before you see him eat.

But there's something wrong in the wind; the virtues are more niggardly.

EARL LEWIS.

The blackest deed from fortune's golden light  
Receives a beauteous gloss.—Let 's to my study . . .

[*Exeunt* EARL LEWIS and BLIGH.

---

## SCENE II.

*Dressing-room : a Screen : a large Bureau, &c.*

*Enter* WALSINGHAM (*in a splendid dressing-gown*) *leaning*  
*on the arm of* ROSETTA.

WALSINGHAM.

Though blind, I can pierce things invisible;  
And feel you drooping like the early lily,  
Nipped with a sudden frost.

Why, what 's the matter ?

ROSETTA.

My father in our absence . . .

WALSINGHAM.

Taken ill ?

ROSETTA.

In health as usual ; but I fear displeased.

WALSINGHAM.

Because of Horace suit ?

Trust to me, my dear. I can lay down very potent arguments.

But is it not singular, your father never sought you here before ?

ROSETTA.

I know not why, but he has always objected to call.

WALSINGHAM.

Be his mood forgiven for sweet tones of thine  
Which thrill the pulses of my withered heart,  
As a wild strain some unstrung instrument  
It waked to music once, ere jarred the chords  
For ever. All thyself, like some strong dream,  
Subdues me to its bent.

*(He places his hand on her forehead.)*

Rosetta ? Why, my child,  
Thy very appellation is an omen !

ROSETTA.

'T was *her* name, sir, whose breath when I drew air  
Failed her. But I found more than mother's love  
And watchful care in my surviving parent.  
Said you, his mood should be forgiven ?

*Forgiven !*

He who is the gentlest being, the most patient  
In all assaults of fortune, the least selfish  
Of any soul that wears his mortal mould,  
No jot of hope abating.

WALSINGHAM.

My dear, I rather apprehend Mr. Basil to be one of those characters who only sympathise with what's above the moon, whereabouts must lie their possessions; for I never heard of any fruits of their ideals lower. They seldom arrive at high station or wealth.

ROSETTA (*with enthusiasm*).

What cares a soul,  
Still looking *homewards*, sir, for fortune's masks,—  
The passing air of preference *here*? My father  
Exalts himself, yea, and above himself,  
Being wise, meek, holy . . . graces that transcend  
Aught that earth's monarchs can invest a man with.

WALSINGHAM.

Depend upon it, 't is all fiction, my girl, and opposed to common sense.

*Enter BASIL.*BASIL (*apart*).

Together! Frost and snowdrop!

Ha! To me

Deal hardly still, just Heavens, so that *there*  
Ye shower down blessings!

From his breast may she  
Remove the load of stone, and, in its stead,  
Give him a heart of flesh ere he depart,  
And be no more beheld!

ROSETTA.

Dear sir, art there?

*(Embraces BASIL.)*

Do not look at me, or my heart will break.

BASIL.

'Tween you and me offence can never live,  
Nor chance arrive to jar one string.

Make known

To Mr. Walsingham my presence here.

ROSETTA (*to WALSINGHAM*).

My father, sir.

BASIL (*aside*).

This joyful pain! . . My soul

Bids me be calm.

WALSINGHAM.

It is with satisfaction

I take your hand.

BASIL (*aside*).

My hand in *thine*! . . once more.

WALSINGHAM.

The tremor in your tone . . .

BASIL (*aside*).

Is it joy or woe?

ROSETTA.

You look as when all said your death impended.

BASIL (*aside*).

I shall die now, *indeed*.

WALSINGHAM.

Through love we bear to her o'er whom thy title  
To reverence I envy, I am bold  
To ask thy friendship.

BASIL.

May she work more wonders !

WALSINGHAM (*in sudden agitation*).

Who speaks?

Rosetta ! say, *what voice ?*

ROSETTA.

My father's.

WALSINGHAM.

Surely ! My other senses sympathise  
With my light-ruined eyes.

BASIL.

Respected sir, . . . .

WALSINGHAM (*in agitation*).

You do me wrong to mock me thus.

(*Aside.*) I 've grown

Foolish.

(*To BASIL.*) I am told . . forgive me . . that thou art  
A poet, Mr. Basil ; one who stretches  
His spirit in the clouds, forgetful he  
Houses upon the earth, while craving wants  
Pluck the bright fabric in his fancy down  
Upon his peace and life.

BASIL (*in a quiet tone*).

I am a lover

Of poetry, sir.

WALSINGHAM (*aside*).

*Again !*

(*Aloud.*) You build, excuse me,  
That which a touch of sense shakes into air.  
Structure of little worth !



BASIL (*with enthusiasm*).

When wearying custom  
Weighs deep as frost on life, and bares her blank  
Realities—till chased away the vision,  
That o'er the innocence of untried youth  
Diffused the enchanted day-dream ; when sore woe  
Clings heav'ly to the heart, whose eyelids sink,  
Jaded with *form* of love without the *spirit*,—  
If genius, brooding o'er the grave of passion,  
Lay ope, through travail of mysterious joy,  
The soul to impulses divine, oh, deem not  
Such pageant empty !

On the brink of time,  
As nature totters, courts and tombs of kings  
Reel from their copestone, all of earth confess  
Her ashes, stands that inward structure firm,  
*Like a believing soul !*

WALSINGHAM (*aside*).

It sounds a something  
I knew a great while since . . . No matter when.  
He talks, . . he talks, but I am old and wary,  
Not to be juggled out of my plain sense.

(*Aloud.*)

Suppose we let that pass ? We should be  
wise sometimes (*with a sardonic smile*). You agree with  
me, do you not, in *that*, Mr. Basil ? *Sometimes ?*

(*After a pause.*) A match is toward. Spurning addi-  
tions of estate for the young gentleman which are not held  
of me, since I must in that case admit division of respect,  
I am not sorry, that Horace has anchored his heart upon  
your property, whose worth, as shall her jointure, strikes  
dumb all eulogy.

Enough ; it but rests with you to give  
a blessing.

BASIL.

Your patience while I first address herself.

WALSINGHAM.

Certainly ! (*Seats himself.*)

(*BASIL comes forward with ROSETTA.*)

BASIL (*tenderly*).

Slight heart ! Do not wrong me so  
To fear more than to love me. Let love lead,  
And all your soul must follow its sweet motion,  
As the low heavens are wheeled obedient  
In measure with the highest.

ROSETTA.

Were love all !

BASIL (*with solemn pathos*).

It is *all* !

When 't is based in tender years  
On provident care, fond fears ; on pious trust  
There must be cause we know not for the bidding  
That stabs, since every pang is sympathised  
By *him* who seems to slay us, though obedience  
Strike 'gainst the heart and brain, yet, like the bee,  
It hath a precious medicine in store  
For every sting. In tract of time, the mind  
Gathers its powers, and sickly visions vanish,  
And DUTY stands new-born. Oh, never can  
Such duty pass away ! . . And never, child,  
Can nature sound its depths . . . 't is twined with life ;  
The sweet constraint we owe to God himself.

ROSETTA.

Hear me, for such solicitude thou feelest,  
Abjure all love, less holy.

BASIL (*apart*).

Too forgetful !  
I should have thee premonished.

ROSETTA.

Dear, my father,  
How pale you look !

BASIL.

Why ugly symptoms will  
Press sometimes on me, that betray me near  
My winding sheet.

ROSETTA.

Dear sir !

BASIL (*with a smile*).

I should not have  
Been born a poet ! But though all examples  
Warned me against it . . .

(*Solemnly.*) THIS MY PART IN LIFE !

ROSETTA.

There 's wormwood in that smile.

BASIL (*aside*).

How slow her eye  
To trace the advent that she will not own,

(*Aloud.*)

Love, leave me now with . . . Mr. Walsingham.

ROSETTA.

Send for me presently.

[*Exit* ROSETTA.](BASIL *approaches* WALSINGHAM, *stops short, returns.*)BASIL (*apart*).

Through sleepless hours  
While the soul laboured, I, 'midst all which scathes,  
Stood riven, not uprooted.

But to peck  
Mine own breast for him like the pelican!

WALSINGHAM.

Rosetta!

Have you sent your daughter hence?

BASIL.

We are alone!

WALSINGHAM.

The child might as well have staid.

If she marry where she has set her heart, you may  
reckon, Mr. Basil, on my portioning her with half my  
wealth; the which, you may not be aware, would be no  
mean dowry for a queen.

BASIL.

I have something first to utter . . . (*Pauses,—then with  
impressive earnestness.*)

Hold your heart  
Firm on his seat! It might affect your life,  
And were not for Rosetta's good, or mine

Eternal, that your blood should fail.

Art thou

Prepared for that, which . . . which . . .

WALSINGHAM (*starting up, agitated*).

*Not I! How should I?*

Blind, as you see . . . a lone, forlorn, wrung slave,  
My pilgrimage of life almost past through,  
Deserted, helpless . . . No, I lie,—I 've power,  
Infinite power to crush, if any dare  
The snake, Remembrance, rouse. Words are but air,  
I know that much, but *mine!*—My accents drop  
Like gall wrung from the adder . . . I am armed  
With breath will blow hot death.

You are forewarned!

I know you not: I do not wish to know you.

(*After a pause, with forced calmness.*)

Had you not best retire?

BASIL.

Though even this hour .

Were not the consequence of what is cureless,  
Our conference must proceed.

First yonder doors;—

I'll bar interposition. There's a scene  
Our hearts must act alone . . . *Alone with God!*

(*BASIL walks languidly towards one door, which he fastens; then across the stage to the other, which he likewise secures. As he is thus engaged, WALSINGHAM speaks.*)

WALSINGHAM (*aside*).

A horror numbs me: though 't is but a guess,  
'T is *such a guess*! Where lurks the treasured spell  
I raised 'gainst chance so terrible? . . . *Who is he?*

BASIL (*advancing to WALSINGHAM*).

Pray be reseated; your emotion tears you.

WALSINGHAM.

As fire a thunder-cloud! Who art thou, man?  
Answer to that: be instant! Why hast closed  
All barriers of approach? Thy utter need  
Makes thee distinct in species from myself,  
Whose hand can rain gold showers!

For that I 'm blind,

My senses cheat me. There is *one* I hate  
Deadlier than any toad; and I could swear  
That ~~HE~~ stood forth like life. Yet were I wrong,  
For he must know I 'd tread upon him straight,  
To crush him.

BASIL (*kneels*).

Sir, uplift thine heel, for thus,  
As in my spirit, prostrate . . .

WALSINGHAM (*interrupting*).

Fool! *thou* art not.

Although the tie it signified hath found  
A burial without pity in my wrath,  
He 'd sound my former title.

BASIL (*with intense emotion*).

Father! Father!

WALSINGHAM.

Great God! I am betrayed!—it *is* the serpent!

BASIL.

Hear why I sought this interview, before  
You stamp me dead.

WALSINGHAM.

Thou scorpion! let me free,  
My malediction shadowing thy life,  
That, mid the world's loud scoffs, thy unrighteous joints  
Creep to a pauper's grave!

BASIL.

'Tis working fast!

WALSINGHAM (*raising his arms*).

I'm big with it!—"T will forth, my curse, all armed!

BASIL (*placing his hand on WALSINGHAM's arm*).

You tear my soul in vain!

(*After a pause, solemnly.*) I here set up  
My troubled rest, until the impervious curtains  
That overhang thy precious sight draw off,  
And show their hollow spaces crammed with dust,  
Unless thou heed me!—Sir, with reverence,  
I must be listened to.

WALSINGHAM.

That ears as eyes

Were seeled, or thou couldst shape no breath!

Well, must you?

BASIL.

'Tis twenty years since first Rosetta Darnley . . .

WALSINGHAM (*breaking in with violence*).

Hath earth, when forth she walked, cried out "Despair?"  
Heaven's dewspread blisters o'er her? Have those  
tresses,

That erst ensnared mankind, been turned to snakes  
To lash her into lameness ?

BASIL.

To yourself

She owned her prior preference of another ;  
But liberal settlements the bargain clenched,  
Which soon the church confirmed.

WALSINGHAM (*not heeding him*).

Do long-lived vipers

Gnaw at her heart, until her conscious life  
Prove lingering torture, which her parched-up lips  
Would ease with gin,—*the harlot's angel* ?

Hath it

Brought her so low, that she lie shelterless  
In shrinking shame ?

BASIL (*endeavouring to stop him*).

Peace ! Peace ! for charity !

(*After a pause.*)

May I remind you, sir, that in those days  
You held that no man, none who knew the sex,  
Or pierced the selfish springs of human action,  
From weak affiance in his wife, could trust  
Her sense of conjugal duty. So believing ;  
You made all nice morality the theme  
Of libertine ridicule, and the restraints  
Which pure religion wrought were snapped with sneers,  
Being founded upon prejudice ! At length  
Thy scorn of hallowed things, thy scepticism,  
Proclaimed aloud in feeble woman's virtue,  
Broke down God's barrier, and your wife . . . *She fell !*



WALSINGHAM.

To this death's pangs are music.

Was the sin

Of her adultery mine?

BASIL.

*It was!*

A woman

Lodged next his heart, concludes her husband comely

Even though Phœbus draw a cypress o'er him!

*(Solemnly.)**So while she is loved she is safe!**(Gradually increasing in warmth as he proceeds.)*

But if her lord

Claim worship like a Fear, or leave her void

Of confidence, endearing memories,

In dear things present blessed, of mutual thoughts

Vowed at the altar, should she spot his bed,

Though shallow fools demure over her, the good

Must grieve, wise pity, and her helpmate brand,

As the far guiltier. Did he gift her weakness

With strength and grace, through *more* than care paternal,

Be sure all foul snakes gendered in her breast

Would die, ere they unclasped their glittering eyes,

Birth-strangled, or, if crawling, they would be crushed

By love and honour!

WALSINGHAM.

God, my sufferings knew!

BASIL.

The grief HE knows, it cleanses hearts, not hardens.

*(After a pause.)*

In life's susceptible hour, oh, where the wonder,

If the young thing who came a sacrifice

To thee, and whose affections you contemned,  
Whose feminine purity you first corrupted,  
Whose very faith thine infidel doctrines shook,  
When he, to whom her heart was given away,  
Abroad for years, came back, exposed and tempted,  
No sacred principle unsapped,—what wonder,  
That she, by thy licentious tenets tainted,  
Made breach of holiest vows?

WALSINGHAM.

I'll hear no more.

BASIL.

Yes, sir, the sequel.

Past a little month  
From the sad day her paramour to England . . .

WALSINGHAM (*breaking in*).

A little month? Yea less of dalliance,  
A husband's curse was answered. Not four weeks  
Had the vile traitors met, when wrath from High  
Struck him to Hell.

What of it? 'Tis no news.

BASIL.

Death's pale hand led him hence, and she was left  
On earth, disconsolate and destitute.

WALSINGHAM.

My prayer to Heaven!

BASIL.

That same week I found her,  
Sad, shelterless, the piercing wind struck sharp,  
The chill rain drenched her locks as still she stood,

Perishing for want ; I heard her tell the blast,  
She'd hold it gentler than the airs of Heaven  
If it would blow her dead.

Even at the word,  
She caught my step, and begged for charity  
A little food, her eyes upturned to mine ;—  
Then with a shriek she prostrate fell to earth.

WALSINGHAM.

You vexed my brain with this until you raised  
A fiery gulf between us ; and I bade you . . .

BASIL.

Thrust forth that injured dying Magdalen  
From her sick bed, the home I had just provided ;  
Yea, with a look more bitter than your speech,—  
“ You 'll not obey me ? Stay a moment ;—if so,  
Be flung into the world's necessities,  
And heir unto my curse ! ” . . .

My soul worked high,  
And I invoked the weight of your anathema,  
Albeit, not owning so much coin as might  
Erect a cabin for a worm, if I  
From the world's obloquy forbore to shield  
Her, your revenge would strike beyond the grave.

Next day you embarked for India.

Did grief  
Sometimes of ruined hopes and blasted prospects  
Whisper, I worked it down.

My penitent . . .

WALSINGHAM (*breaking in*).

Ghostly Disease ! and frenzied Fear, Remorse,  
Clasp round her ever !

BASIL (*interrupting, with deep feeling*).

Father ! Speak no more  
Such pride-envenomed words. Oh, what are we,  
Worms of an hour ! to assert self-consequence,  
And ban each other ?

WALSINGHAM (*fiercely*).

Tortures of my hate ! . . .

BASIL (*solemnly*).

They cannot reach her !

Her seducer died  
Ere waned their moon of meeting ; and within  
Four months her soul fled hence to rest with him  
Who breathed it into being . . and her body  
Moulder'd within oblivion's darksome brink.

(WALSINGHAM *appears struck. He preserves expressive  
silence, with his hand on his brow.*)

WALSINGHAM (*after a while in a deep low voice*).

And were my wrongs my bed-fellow, the while  
That all I worshipped and abhorred was withered  
Down to the dust ?

(WALSINGHAM *sinks into his seat, exhibiting strong  
symptoms of emotion. BASIL stands apart in an  
attitude of respectful observation. During the awe-  
struck silence, an invisible door in the wall opens,  
through which the COUNTESS LEWIS cautiously  
enters from the lawn. She pauses to listen, then  
closes the door. BASIL is concealed from her by the  
partition screen.*)

COUNTESS.

Oh, gracious Heaven! grant . . .

*(She breaks off.)**(Then with great emotion.)*

Great God! How dreadful 't is to meditate  
That which we dare not pray that Heaven may prosper!

*(She glides stealthily towards the bureau, with a key in  
her hand, which, perceiving BASIL, starting, she lets  
drop.)*

COUNTESS *(with a faint scream).*

Good angels! Not alone?

WALSINGHAM.

Some one is near! Whose voice? Speak instantly!

*(The COUNTESS, after having let fall her veil, advances.)*

COUNTESS.

Mine, Isabel's, sir.—I knew not you were engaged.  
I will retire, since . . .

WALSINGHAM.

How didst find admission?

Eh? *(After a pause.)*

Mr. Basil, you will please to leave us.

BASIL *(aside to WALSINGHAM).*

I am trusted with a legacy from your wife.

WALSINGHAM *(violently—aside to BASIL).*

I'll hear no syllable further.

BASIL (*aside to WALSHINGHAM*).

Bid the Countess

Away, or she will learn . . .

WALSINGHAM (*aside to BASIL*).

If needs I must

Hang my sick ears upon thy lips, to suck  
The gall of asps, be it deferred till midnight  
Lulls at things in unconsciousness.

The postern,

It opens to the park. The key (*gives a key*).

My door,

Ajar, shall point you to your secret victim.

BASIL (*aside to WALSHINGHAM*).

I'll sort my heart to patience till that hour.

WALSINGHAM (*aside to BASIL*).

If you dare claim relationship, my curse  
Impends, as you shall feel.

BASIL (*aside to WALSHINGHAM*).

'T is you shall feel

*Me*, sir. . At midnight!

(*To the COUNTESS.*) Pardon me, my lady!

WALSINGHAM (*sinking on his seat*).

*Leave me!*

[*Exit BASIL.*

(*The COUNTESS, having first taken up the key she had  
let drop, approaches.*)

Thou Isabel also! *Leave me, Life!*

*Leave me* . . to my distraction!

Weak, bereft,

Desolate! What's to you?—Send here Rosetta.  
Be quick in it!

[*Exit* Countess.]

Revenged?—Revenge by death  
Is gall and ashes!

When *he* thirsteth, give him  
To quaff remorse and bitterness . . . like mine!

END OF ACT SECOND. .

## A C T III.

## SCENE I.

*A boudoir apartment. Bow window to the floor open.*

*Moonlight upon the foliage and balcony without.*

HORACE and ROSETTA.

HORACE.

Now when my hopes have wings, and every wish  
Is courted to be lively . . . . .

ROSETTA.

Though my name  
Lay bleeding in my cries, I 'll raise the house.

HORACE.

Art not my plighted bride ?

ROSETTA.

My life's sole beacon,  
My father's will, warns otherwise. Besides  
This rash invasion of my privacy  
Hath turned all love to shame. I had hoped you'd aid  
My upward flight on wings of downy peace,  
Though yourself fell to ruin.



HORACE.

Hear Rosetta !

ROSETTA.

But I perceive, no incense to be flung  
With white-hand innocence, unto the shrine  
Of *virtuous* love thou bringest, but base engines  
To raze it to the dust.

HORACE.

The track marked out  
By moral feeling I have rashly strayed from.

ROSETTA.

FEEELING can never stand the shock of time  
Under the form of *duty*. False that passion,  
Nor meant for permanence, that is not based  
On PRINCIPLE as stable as the poles  
Uplifting Heaven.

(*With emotion.*) What trust hath woman else ?

HORACE.

Mark how in lines of grief thy unkind repulse  
Is printed in my face.

ROSETTA.

Thou lovest me not,  
Or straight thou wouldst divorce thee from my sight.

HORACE.

To cast adrift this bark . . . . .

(*A noise without.*)

ROSETTA (*listening*).

What mingled cries  
Come quickening on my ear ? Again ! and louder !

EARL LEWIS (*without*).

What, ho ! Arise ! Foul murder has been done.

HORACE.

What said he ? Murder ?

ROSETTA.

Horace, haste from hence !

(HORACE goes to the balcony : then rushes back, exclaiming—)

Great God ! Undone ! The ladder 's not forthcoming.

(*Violent knocking at the chamber-door.*)

VOICE (*without*).

Buried in sleep ?

ROSETTA.

Oh, here begin our ruins.

No opening for escape !

(ROSETTA goes to the casement, and returns.)

HORACE (*at the casement*).

Where art thou, Bligh ?

(HORACE returns.)

No answer ! *Fled !*

ROSETTA.

Fair name and honour blasted !

HORACE.

Kill me, and save them ! Lay the fault on me.

(*Renewed outcries : knocking at the chamber-door.*)

EARL LEWIS (*without*).

Do you hear me, Miss Basil, there has been murder!  
Open your door.

ROSETTA.

Lost! lost for ever!

*(She stands for a moment like one paralyzed; then, as if with sudden recollection, she runs to a door, which she opens.)*

Heavens be thanked!

It leads

To Mr. Walsingham's apartments. Thence  
The grounds are easily reached . . . Away!

HORACE.

Farewell!

[*Exit* HORACE.]

*(Loud knocking.)*

ROSETTA (*listening*).

Not yet:—yes, now he treads the lobby;—now  
Descends the stairs:—the inner door;—that opens . . .  
He has passed . . . Thank God!

EARL LEWIS (*without*).

Why will you not undo the door? Unheard of horror!

ROSETTA (*unfastening the door*).

Come in! These horrid cries?

*Enter* EARL LEWIS.

EARL LEWIS (*looking cautiously around*).

(*Aside.*)

The hunt is up : the fox, he seeks the toils !

(*Aloud.*) We are in search of the assassin.

ROSETTA.

Heavens !

What's this ?—Assassin !

EARL LEWIS.

Ha ! then, know you not,

In his bedchamber, weltering in gore,

Sleeps Mr. Walsingham ?

ROSETTA.

Oh, say not so !

Not dead ?

EARL LEWIS.

By violence slain.

ROSETTA.

There may be life :

He was to me most kind : . . *was* !

(*She goes to the inner door, which she opens ; and then quickly shuts it in agitation.*)

Not that passage !

This way's as short. Will you descend ?

EARL LEWIS.

I'll follow.

The body must not be displaced.

ROSETTA.

*The body!**(After a pause of hesitation and trembling.)*[*Exit* ROSETTA.]

EARL LEWIS.

Not by that passage?

All goes to my wish,  
To crown my hopes in lazy drops of blood.

*(He pauses.)*

The deed on Horace fixed, then, Isabel,  
To heaven, or whither else thy sickness pleases!

[*Exit* EARL LEWIS.]

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## SCENE II.

*(A spacious bed-chamber. WALSINGHAM, stretched on an ottoman, bleeding and inanimate: BASIL kneeling by his side: HORACE standing near: two OFFICERS OF JUSTICE at the door: group of Household: a sword, stained with blood, and mantle on the floor.)*

HORACE.

His white hairs blood-drenched! Open thou his vest,  
I fear the life hath —

BASIL.

No ! you see he moves !  
And you will bring no help.

*(After a pause, in a low voice.)*

The blood that's in me,  
It is thine own . . . oh, would thou hadst it back !

HORACE.

These wasted streams of nature ! There's no breathing.

BASIL.

If there were spark of holy kindness left  
In any present, he would let me seek  
Surgical aid.

Ha ! see his breast, it heaves  
Against the napkin placed to bind the wound.  
Life would rekindle were the blood but stanch'd  
By good appliance.

HORACE.

'T will be here directly.

BASIL.

Well said ! well said !

*Enter* EARL LEWIS *and* OFFICERS OF POLICE.

BASIL *(to* EARL LEWIS*).*

My lord, this snail-paced surgeon ?  
Death but usurps awhile on nature. Life,  
Though he looks immortal, is not placed beyond  
Recovery in time.

EARL LEWIS.

The hand of murder  
To strong suspicion points you out, as being  
Confederate of Horace.

HORACE.

Mine, sir? Mine?

EARL LEWIS (*to Officer of Police*).

Attracted by the cry, next instant stilled,  
Of Walsingham, whom first did you encounter?

OFFICER OF POLICE.

The man in black, who stood trembling like one distracted;  
soon after we lit upon his companion lurking  
behind that door.

HORACE.

Incredible calumny! To charge so horrid,  
I cannot deign . . .

EARL LEWIS (*taking up the sword*).

This blade, though, may speak for you  
In vermeil characters . . your mantle likewise  
Is curiously enamelled! What dost *here*?

HORACE.

(*Aside.*) Ha! (*aloud.*) I'll not answer thee.

EARL LEWIS (*to BASIL*).

Nor you, man? How art called?

BASIL.

No name have I,  
Or none in presence of this stifled form.  
(*Suddenly.*)  
A warmth breathes out of him!

*Enter the COUNTESS, ROSETTA, and SURGEON.*

BASIL (*eagerly to Surgeon*).

He has but swooned  
With loss of blood . . and feel ! . this pulse it beats ;  
Weakness of age is all.  
Now, then, be still ! Speak ! Save two souls alive !

EARL LEWIS (*aside*).

I'll profit by the adventure, but next chance !

BASIL (*raising his finger*).

Noise ! Noise ! . . observe him !

SURGEON (*after a pause*).

I find no mortal symptom.

BASIL (*exultingly breaking in*).

Oh ! I knew it.

How should he leave the world in anger with me ?

ROSETTA (*aside*).

Dread horror ! Horace ! Father ! What portends  
*His* presence ?

COUNTESS (*to EARL LEWIS*).

Say, what blood-stained mystery ?

THE EARL (*to COUNTESS*).

The demon of the night, with lazy wing,  
Shakes dew to sit on ladies' freckles. Prudent  
To shield thy charms within thy couch.

Hence with them !

[ *The COUNTESS retires to one side.*



ROSETTA.

My father, why art here?

BASIL.

Ha! Thou Rosetta? Down with me to earth!  
Beside this crimson river kneel, until  
Our warm life ebb and fill its empty caves,  
And we anew are fathered!

[ROSETTA *kneels*.

Plead with Heaven,  
At this dread point those ears play not the truant,  
But God breathe back his sense.

Thou art most concerned!

EARL LEWIS.

It would seem he has received his wound from a delirious man.

BASIL (*addressing WALSINGHAM*).

Seek not the covert of the wormy ground,  
Sunshine in store.

Who founders out at sea  
Sinks down o'erawed; but wrecked in sight of shore,  
He 'd scare the night with wailing cries for aid,  
Clutching at jagged rocks, and e'en 'gainst fate,  
Struggle . . as thou shouldst do!

It was not panting  
With horror that o'erturns the frame of nature,  
I thought to cast this infant at thy feet,  
When first I greeted her . .

SURGEON.

Give air:

(*To BASIL.*) Those drops  
Clammy upon your brow, and—reach your hand . . .

(*Takes BASIL's hand.*)

Damp as the grave! to which, methinks, you are nearer  
Than this old gentleman: whom leave with me.

(BASIL and ROSETTA come forward).

(*Officers of Police and Household closing round MR. WAL-  
SINGHAM, he and the SURGEON are hidden from the  
Audience.*)

EARL LEWIS (*to Policeman*).

You had better secure the party at once on charge of  
murder.

ROSETTA (*aside*).

Murder! What party?—I begin to fear  
Justice hath fled to Heaven.

BASIL.

I startle at myself, but make appeal  
To the Invisible, whose quenchless gaze  
Pierced through the gloom this murder to detect,  
That my heart's ignorant, and hands are clear  
Of such blood-guiltiness.

Yon darkened lamp,  
Its livid spire just tempered with a gleam  
The obscurity of night when first I entered.  
I caught his shriek, and rushed, and falling raised him  
Upon that couch; then fanned the spark of life,  
Loudly the while exclaiming, till my voice  
He knew for an instant, spake, and . . .

(*With sudden horror.*) Oh, my God! . . .  
That instant sense in both became suspended,  
And I recall no more;—

The rest's a dream  
Of flitting shadows, and the blight of tombs!

EARL LEWIS.

"When first you entered!" Why, art in thy senses,  
To walk 'mid blight and shadows through my house?

BASIL (*abstracted*).

To kill an innocent name with breath so blasting!  
*His* murder! . . . horrible!

WALSINGHAM.

A father's curse!

Upon his head, if ever . . .

(*BASIL rushes to the couch.*)

SURGEON.

He raves he knows not what as he revives.

(*BASIL returns.*)

BASIL (*aside*).

His thin grey hair stands on his reverend front;  
His hueless lips murmur with quivering tongue,  
Whilst his vein'd hands, enclasped, are raised to Heaven  
Against me, if . . . I am quelled.

Now, soul, be firm,  
Impervious as the brow of midnight sleep!

EARL LEWIS (*to HORACE*).

You have not explained why you came hither.  
Did you penetrate the wall, or rise through the floor?  
How dost acquit thee of this assassination?

HORACE.

Whose?—He lives!  
Seek of him proofs to rend the veil of darkness.

SURGEON.

The wounded man, my lord, is desirous to name the delinquent who sought his life.

(BASIL, ROSETTA, HORACE, and OFFICERS OF JUSTICE approach: the Household draw back and discover WALSINGHAM and SURGEON: EARL LEWIS stands on one side, near the front: WALSINGHAM half raises himself: BASIL kneels.)

BASIL (*to WALSINGHAM solemnly*).

Tell, if you know !

WALSINGHAM.

A wretch found foul and guilty by a jury  
Panelled of curses, such as go direct  
To Heaven, and pluck down thunder.

BASIL (*in an awful voice*).

Hoary man !

From under me, at every word thou speakest,  
The earth slides dizzily, and all my thoughts  
Reel without hold or footing . . .

WALSINGHAM.

Parricide !

Unto the world be undiscovered ever  
The knowledge of thy motive, but I feel  
The deed of vengeance thine !

BASIL (*in a hollow voice*).

He said the same

When struggling from his blood, each syllable  
Like mountains fell upon me,—never, *never*  
To be removed.

My warrant for the grave !

(*BASIL totters and leans against the side of the ottoman.*)

WALSINGHAM.

Betwixt us twain there lies a gulf of hatred,  
He hoped to have waded through in blood.

(*Aside to BASIL.*) So this,  
My vile wife's legacy?

(*Aloud.*) The wretch! . his name? .  
Basil, . . . I arraign of murder!

ROSETTA.

Sir, thy speech

Recall: defame him not!

(*To BASIL.*) This calumny  
Confound. Deny the charge. He droops! Great God!  
And cannot answer!

WALSINGHAM.

What was 't brought him hither?  
To this one terrible point,—more sharp than steel  
To pierce, he is silent.

ROSETTA (*goes to BASIL with her hand on his arm*).

Oh! his inward sense

Passes in anguish.

(*BASIL stands far back on one side, wholly absorbed in his wretchedness; ROSETTA near: lost in observing him. They are so abstracted that neither is aware of what follows at the front of the stage.*)

THE EARL.

Wait the prisoners still?

OFFICER OF POLICE.

There is one thing, my lord, which I should before have mentioned. During his entrancement, we found upon the accused this pocket-book, which appears to contain bills and notes of high amount (*produces parchment book*). Mr. Walsingham's name is inscribed within on the cover.

THE EARL (*aside*).

Marvellous!

THE COUNTESS (*coming forward*).

Amazement shakes me! I must in his chamber,  
*That pocket book . . .*

THE EARL (*perceiving her*).  
Disease unto my sight!

COUNTESS (*vehemently*).*That book . . .*

THE EARL (*interrupting*).  
Oh, poison to my ears! Retire!

COUNTESS.

I am bound to speak! Whole Earth and Heaven would  
blush  
If I forbear.

THE EARL.

These violent transports check.

(*Seizes her wrist.*)(COUNTESS *struggles.*)

THE EARL (*pointing the sword at the COUNTESS*).  
Was I not heard?

COUNTESS (*to POLICE*).  
Protect me from his rage!

(*The COUNTESS throws herself on her knees.*)

'Tis Heaven impels me to reveal that . . . Basil!  
Rosetta! Grandfather!

(*Stops short, breathless.*)

OFFICER OF POLICE.

Delirious!  
Who struck from darkness light, may thence call forth  
Discovery.  
What hast to say?

COUNTESS (*suddenly bewildered, starts up, then raises her  
hand to her forehead*).

That some dark hint would justle forward now,  
And goad my memory!

HORACE.

What means this, sister?

COUNTESS (*wildly*).

'T is lost!  
Like what we think, can never shun remembrance,  
Yet of a sudden 's gone beyond the clouds.

THE EARL.

There, take her hence! Her reason in her couch  
Will recollect its scattered powers.

*(Attendants approach and secure the COUNTESS.)*

COUNTESS *(deliriously)*.

I'll not . . .

Till I've made known . . . that pocket-book, *I! I!*  
Oh, my distraction!—Perfect loss of thought!

*(The COUNTESS stands as rigid, with catalepsy.)*

*[Exit COUNTESS, borne out.]*

THE EARL.

What's more to prove, to-morrow. Now away!

*(The preceding bye-play of the COUNTESS and EARL LEWIS has passed so rapidly, the Police and others breaking the view, that BASIL, overwhelmed with grief, and ROSETTA, lost in observing him, were not conscious of it.)*

*(HORACE and BASIL are arrested.)*

ROSETTA.

'T is false! Traduce not Basil. He is not  
The homicide; but Bligh.—*Bligh!* Hunt him out.  
Unblenched, we'll confront justice! Swelling heart!  
'T will burst!

BASIL *(to Officer of Police)*.

A moment: she is my child . . . Excuse me.

*(Apart to ROSETTA.)*

You'll heed my counsel?



ROSETTA.

As a voice of life.

BASIL.

Leave me to Heaven. With a silent spirit,  
Trust to the sacred powers that work in silence.  
Shun Horace ; and as you would start from risk  
Of thy soul's slaughter, thence thy love expunge.  
In the infectious flames such passion lights  
You both must perish.

Lo ! the heavens yawn  
To let down horror. Shudder, ere too late :  
Your union were *incest* !

(ROSETTA swoons away in his arms.)

BASIL.

Bless'd flower !

(BASIL bears ROSETTA in his arms to WALSINGHAM.)

Thou venerable sire :—Rosetta !

WALSINGHAM.

Ha !

BASIL.

I mean my child . . . you'll cherish her ?

WALSINGHAM (*feebly*).

Where is she ?

BASIL (*to ROSETTA*).

Thou dost not feel my kiss : one other !—so !

WALSINGHAM (*feebly*).

*Where is she?*

BASIL (*solemnly*).

Sir,—her cheek is next thy heart!

(BASIL *places* ROSETTA *on the couch of* WALSINGHAM,  
*and then sinks at his feet. As the OFFICERS OF*  
*POLICE approach the scene closes.*)

END OF ACT THIRD.

## ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

*A magnificent Drawing-room in EARL LEWIS'S mansion.*

*The EARL LEWIS and Nurse discovered: the COUNTESS reclining near.*

NURSE.

Her ladyship complains not of her insidious ailment ;  
but she 'll muse for hours together !

EARL LEWIS.

Still remains that dread night a blank in memory ?

NURSE.

Totally, my lord.

On Miss Basil's departure last week, her ladyship wept.  
She supposes Miss Rosetta then returned to her father,  
of whose trial and condemnation Lady Lewis appears  
wholly ignorant, though on other subjects perfectly  
collected.

EARL LEWIS.

'Tis well she has travelled thus far from her chamber.  
Steal forth nurse, I would confer with her.

[*Exit NURSE.*]

My brother-in-law's acquittal by means of Rosetta's evidence matters not, his name having been struck from out the will. My deep-laid scheme has answered, and Isabel, unless her death forestall fortune, must prove *sole* heiress. However, my needs are instant, and shall be instantly supplied.

But in her state?

There is no help for it.

*(He advances to the couch.)*

*(After a pause.)*

How farest my lady?

COUNTESS.

I kindly thank you, but my soul seems pierced  
As with a load of guilt.

EARL LEWIS.

Mere brain-creation!

COUNTESS.

There's something o'er my memory casts a stupor  
That hides . . . how long have I been mantled thus?

EARL LEWIS.

'T is three weeks since . . . .

COUNTESS *(after striving to recollect).*

I seek but cannot find it.

EARL LEWIS.

I will quicken your ladyship's memory.  
That bureau, you wot of, holds gems I'd have you  
bring me.

*(The Countess starts: then, after a pause.)*

COUNTESS.

I'd ta'en a heavenly dream. You anger me  
To wake me to this world.

EARL LEWIS.

I heard Walsingham order his carriage.  
You had better seek the opening that leads to his chamber.

COUNTESS.

Terrors are mine, and from the depths below  
Despair looks out, and beckons me to sink!  
Excuse me, dear my lord!

EARL LEWIS.

Fulfil thy charge  
To the full bent of thy commission, *else!*

COUNTESS (*wringing her hands*).

Not that! *Not that*—No! sooner the fixt earth  
Fall from its shattered base!

EARL LEWIS.

Wouldst mar my hopes?  
Love, you forget, I am not obliged to hush  
The theft up of that pearl.

I hope you mark me.

COUNTESS (*apart, with energy*).

*It shall not be again!*

My first wrong step  
I will myself confess;—then die! That ends it!  
Where is my elixir? . . . That I had never been!

EARL LEWIS (*comes forward*).

Determine!

COUNTESS.

'T is determined !

EARL LEWIS.

Dear, about it.

*(After a pause.)*

What leprosy of fear sits on thy cheek ?

Use rouge, thou art not too fair for 't.

*(Turns away.)*

COUNTESS.

My distress  
Grows headstrong, and my soul, for want of counsel,  
Sickens.

Brief breathing space is mine, and I . .  
Rosetta ? Ay, I promised her . . . .

*[Exit COUNTESS.]**Enter MRS. BLIGH.*

Who let you in ? What is your business ?

MRS. BLIGH.

My lord, you know me ?

EARL LEWIS.

Your face is new to me.

MRS. BLIGH.

My husband's name,

My lord, is Bligh.

EARL LEWIS *(starting)*.

Eternal furies ! . . . Hush !

*(Looking round.) (Aside.)* Gone !*(Aloud.)* You were bound for Australia ?

MRS. BLIGH.

We were wrecked off Wexford, but providentially reached the land in safety. There we learned, by the newspapers, that my husband was sought by the emissaries of justice. That same hour Bligh determined to start for Dublin—Thence to London. We lodge now in our old apartment.

*Enter HORACE (speaking as he enters).*

HORACE.

I must see my sister.—Ha!

EARL LEWIS (*aside*).

Would that in the fishes maw ye both were confined!

MRS. BLIGH.

This letter speaks Bligh's mind.

(*Gives a letter.*)

HORACE (*apart*).

Did she say Bligh?

I'll not lose this blessed chance.

(EARL LEWIS *unfolds the letter: as he reads, HORACE slowly passes across the stage, and exit.*)

EARL LEWIS (*apart, read.*)

"Basil shall not be exiled"—

What 's to him?

Thou art officious, Bligh! Thick-eyed! The moonshine  
Filling the void 's not substance, and, o'erbalanced,  
Thou wouldst drag me with thee down the brink.

(*Reads.*) "I trust,

Thou 'lt intercede for him!"

(*After a pause, as he crushes the letter.*)

Thinks he I am stronger than the laws to annul a jury's verdict?

*(Rekurs to the letter.)*

"Hold personal intercourse?" Not I!

"*Walsingham's son's daughter is alive.*"

Indeed! "I know where she resides."

*(After a long pause of deep thought.)*

My Countess cannot last; and to bar the wrongs of fortune in her death, I'll compass an union with the old Cræsus' grandchild. 'T would warrant greater risk.

*(Aloud.)* Your husband's well? This way.

*(EARL LEWIS and MRS. BLIGH retire up the stage to a writing table. As THE EARL is writing, re-enter HORACE with an attendant.)*

HORACE *(to ATTENDANT)*.

That's she! watch with a guardful eye near the hall door. Follow her; and when she is housed, join me with an officer of justice on the terrace below. Reply not—warily!

*[Exit ATTENDANT.]*

HORACE *(apart)*.

Now Basil I will clear thee; and myself.  
Both in thought of Walsingham be righted!

*[Exit HORACE.]*

*(EARL LEWIS and MRS. BLIGH come forward.)*



EARL LEWIS (*giving letter*).

This is to signify the hour when I will call;  
We must force your husband abroad.  
Good-day to you, good woman!

[*Exit Mrs. BLIGH.*

(*In moody abstraction.*)

But that I know the stuff that Bligh is composed of.

*Enter ATTENDANT.*

ATTENDANT.

I was ordered by my lady to place this in your lordship's hands.

(*Gives a letter.*)

EARL LEWIS.

Leave me!

[*Exit ATTENDANT.*

(*Opening the letter.*)

Ha! what's written here?

(*Reads.*) "Your tyranny hath overpassed itself. Ere the day shall have elapsed, those eyes which read this shall fall before my vengeance their stretched fierceness. The dead are heirs no longer!"

(*After a pause of thought, slowly crushing the letter.*)

Curse on my negligent confidence not to have forecasted it! I should have known that danger lurks close by such security. The surest step loses its footing in this slippery world.

I must be prompt, lest in her humour . . .

[*Exit hurriedly.*

## SCENE II.

BASIL'S *apartment.**A mean attic : the same as in Act 1st, Scene 3rd.*ROSETTA (*seated*).

I weep no more : the sources are drawn dry.

A cold hard man is Walsingham. To tears  
Indifferent, as the rock to summer waves,  
He will not see my father, who, alas !  
Daily and visibly decays, not hopeless ;—  
But defecate from sense. His squalid roof  
Shines radiant with beams of fire and beauty,  
Slanting like Israel's visionary scale,  
And every thought comes from and climbs to heaven.

*Enter the COUNTESS.*

Dear Lady Lewis !

THE COUNTESS (*sinking into a chair*).

Oh, dear Isabel !

(*Holding up a phial.*)

Ere I carouse this off, I am bound, my guilt,—  
Fatal remembrance of a deed, since followed  
By deeper acts ! . . .

Why start mine eyes ? *This chamber ?*  
What thought was that I had e'en now ? 'T is gone !  
And yet its burthen remains here . . .

ROSETTA.

Dear friend !

*(Aside.)*

She's still delirious !

*(COUNTRESS turns away in agitation.)*ROSETTA *(after listening)*.

Who is that ascending ?

*His step ?* What, Walsingham ?VOICE *(without)*.

Which door, Rosetta ?

ROSETTA *(rushing out)*.

Here, here, my dear sir,—

Let me be your guide !

*Re-enter ROSETTA with WALSHINGHAM.**(The COUNTRESS seats herself on one side.)*

WALSINGHAM.

I have come to thee in hopes thou'lt flatter me  
To swear I am miserable. I would change  
Lots with the serf who lays him down to sleep  
After the coarsest meal earned with his sweat.

ROSETTA.

Have comfort, dearest sir.

WALSINGHAM.

In thee, Rosetta !

My taste of time is gone ; and life henceforth  
Is but a walk in night and storm.—No child  
Have I to love me.

ROSETTA (*with reproachful feeling*).

Had you, from her arms  
But to be snatched ! Then when some fellow-creature  
You implored to grant you hearing, would it not  
Leave your heart vacant to despair, to find  
Your hopes, poured forth in earnest conjuration,  
Were all in vain ?

(*After a pause.*)

How can you think he stabbed you ?

WALSINGHAM.

Think ?—He struck home !

ROSETTA.

What, Basil ?

WALSINGHAM.

My arch-fiend !

ROSETTA (*indignantly*).

You know him not : arch-fiend ?—We guess what essence  
Have angels by him. My father . . .

WALSINGHAM.

Is my son !

ROSETTA (*after a pause of astonishment*).

I 'm drowned in tears.—

So near derived of thee !

WALSINGHAM.

I may watch over *thee*.

(*He embraces her.*)

ROSETTA.

No ; on my view,  
As Basil's, shall the isles of banishment . . .

WALSINGHAM (*breaking in*).

What's all this evil talk !

Life's downward slope  
To tread, nor one kind voice to bid God speed ?

ROSETTA (*timidly*).

What shall I say to move thee visit Basil ?

WALSINGHAM.

But talk for ever, music's in thy voice !

ROSETTA.

He'll prove his innocence.

WALSINGHAM (*shaking his head*).

My heart drops blood !

Girl, he is guilty.

That parchment book of mine—containing bills and  
notes, found upon his person—I build on certain proof.

COUNTESS (*apart*).

My soul starts in me !

WALSINGHAM.

'T was *that* determined the verdict of the jury, the rather  
perhaps remembering his threadbare indigence.

(*The COUNTESS starts up and advances in manifest  
trepidation.*)

COUNTESS (*apart*).

The clouds disperse! It blazes on my brain!  
Which wakes to apprehensiveness, and shows  
That night of murder, late obscured, but graven  
On my susceptible sense.

As thou wert breaking,  
Heart, throb not! That my eyes burst 't is no matter!

WALSINGHAM.

They scouted the pretence, that some unknown lady  
had lost the property in his apartment!  
My pocket-book!

ROSETTA (*agitated*).

Shrinking to read the trial I ne'er heard  
Before—a book! . . . *left here by* . . . Isabel!  
Know you of? . . . Speak!

Scared out of memory's use?

WALSINGHAM.

I grant, that all men lie. I will avoid him none the  
less, for I hate falsehoods that are incredible, because to  
no purpose.

COUNTESS (*with energy of action and voice*).

He spoke the truth, as holy Heaven is truth!

WALSINGHAM.

Who says so?

COUNTESS (*with emphasis*).

Isabel!

I . . . I was she,

Who basely watched your absence, to purloin,  
With a false key, rich diamonds, but, startled,

Snatched thence in lieu that book. My conscience, then,  
Like whirlwind, drove me forth.

Grown faint; 't was Basil  
Saved me from pilfering rabble, that, till now  
I thought had stolen my pillage.

(*With increased energy.*)

His defence,—  
The mantle of its mystery I cast off;  
The guilt was *mine*!—Lord Lewis, his instigation.

ROSETTA.

This was your self-devoured wretchedness.

(*Turning to WALSINGHAM timidly.*)

So likewise blood attaints him not.

Sir, see him.

WALSINGHAM.

To rip old tortures up! Yet further pause  
Will turn suspense to madness. He will resign her,  
A sacrifice to fill my hungry heart!  
If so—I cannot keep this passion in! Thou'st conquered!

(*Goes to the door.*)

My carriage there! To Newgate!—to . . . my son!

ROSETTA (*clinging to him*).

I love thee dearly for it! Bless thee! Thanks!

(*They embrace.*)

[*Exit WALSINGHAM.*]

COUNTESS (*with faltering voice*).

My heart so fails with thinking how I have angered  
All holy things above! My soul shrieks out,  
Ah! whither would you rush, and to what torments?

ROSETTA.

To none. Be more composed!

COUNTESS (*vehemently*).

I shall pass raving!

ROSETTA.

Thou wilt not face Omnipotence. That phial!

(*Takes phial from the COUNTESS.*)

The heavens wipe out the writing of thy purpose!

COUNTESS (*with grasping emphasis*).

Oh! Power benign, how merciful! Dear breath!  
Blessed life! I'll tell you how it happened.

Hark!

ROSETTA.

Poor Isabel! seek repose upon my couch.

[*Exeunt.*]

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## SCENE III.

*A cell in Newgate.*BASIL (*seated*).

The stagnant air of solitude affects  
My inmost spirit ; and my mind, turned forth  
To tread the waste of desolate despair,  
Would sink, but that a higher strength, that's lent  
By HIM who purifies the heart with grief,  
Supports me.

All around, athwart the gloom,  
Float in dim beauty angel shadowings,  
That whisper peace. I uplift my sight beyond  
This murky mansion to the untroubled heavens,  
And traffic in my silent soul with thoughts  
Too calm and bright for tears, for smiles too awful.

The giant Hope that grasps eternity  
Can trample mortal passion. In life's dawn,  
I had thought it shame to not achieve renown ;  
And agony—oblivion's sable veil  
Cast over me—*forgotten* in the dust,  
To sleep ; and oh ! at pitch of noon, earth's mists  
Cloud the bright hopes that lay round my horizon  
In glorious train.

Like the dissolving Iris,  
Which sinks its crest in exhalations dim,  
My languid fame, that fades in sign of nothing,  
Ne'er will revive in beauty.

But her joys,  
Wooing the wills of men to vanity,

Are patent to me now. They are airy bubbles  
That swell with silence all within, which Time  
Bursts as he passes by, or takes with him,  
In scorn.

Then this worst curse of honour—exile  
My soul, as 't were one lofty thought of heaven,  
Doth antidote with smiles that speak of peace,  
Though o'er the valley of the shadow of death  
They are kindled . . . to be quenched !

By harsh injustice

Deformed, all meaner, wanton hope will sport  
Round my cold heart no more. I could outlive  
This, yea the sweet report of fame, but not  
O'er *her* irrevocable loss repine  
Who from her cradle grew before me still.  
In *that* point ends the struggle ; and I am shivered,  
Never to raise my head !

A few steps off

Laughs fresh the open air ! Around the mart,  
The populous avenues, the bridges that,  
Like rainbows, arch the river, thick with sails  
Sprinkled, and groves of masts and argosies,  
Towers, temples, columns, palaces ! They rise  
Before my brain, a grand and dreadful dream,  
But to the world reality ! I hear  
The cheering hum. Hark ! There the children shout.  
I catch the rattling of the wheels,—and now  
Methinks a rushing tumult sweeps the street.  
That horrid twang betrays some beggar's ballad :  
I see the very hawker clad in rags,  
Wide-mouthed.

*(After a pause, as if listening.)*

*How noiseless !*

This is dismal silence

Lurks in the heart of life . . joy! Such things are  
Even now . . . and—I am *here*!

So Providence wills,  
Making his agent man! . . . that man a parent!—  
'T is hard, at this sad strait his obduracy!  
Not see me, hear me, when his calm of soul  
Depends upon it!

In such sick desire,—  
The impatient apprehension of my heart  
At its self-sacrifice unconsummated,—  
My restiff nature bursts to life again,  
Gasping with sudden terror, till my soul,—  
Like wintry clouds which, scattering awhile,  
Tinge their black folds with gleams of fleeting light  
That struggle ghastly through the gaping trench,  
To close again o'ercast,—in thickest gloom—  
Unwilling is flung back.

Who 'd break my dreams?  
Hear I aright?—God grant it may be he!  
For *his* sake . . . Even for *his*!

*Enter* TURNKEY *with* WALSINGHAM.

TURNKEY.

The prisoner 's there!

[*Exit* TURNKEY.]

BASIL.

My father! Hold! Ye straining heart-strings hold!  
Until I hear his blessing.

WALSINGHAM.

Destiny,  
That o'er the shifting course of human will

Holds paramount dominion, here hath driven  
Me wretched!—what wouldst with me?

BASIL.

Sir, Rosetta! . .

WALSINGHAM.

Oh, tread not black oblivion's sacred ground,  
Guarded by misery!

BASIL.

Sir, not your wife,

But . . . . .

WALSINGHAM.

You remind me well. In all the world  
There 's one thing left my feeble years to covet;  
And that—(*pauses*).

BASIL (*with energy*).

Is 't mine?

WALSINGHAM.

It is, I dare not . . . but—

(*Mournfully.*)

I am a weak old man!

BASIL (*with fervour*).

'T is *thine*, my father,

Be it my heart's blood.

WALSINGHAM.

Spoken kindly *that*;

(*After a pause.*)

You own a daughter!

BASIL (*aside, striking his heart*).

Burst! but not for grief;  
*I've had enough of life!*

WALSINGHAM.

I guess how dear  
She is to you, and feel how little right  
I have to ask her of you . . Pardon me!

BASIL (*bursting into tears*).

I do, I do! from . . . Father, from my soul!

WALSINGHAM.

But ere you make reply, hark, how I'll bribe you.  
Enforce Rosetta's stay,—thou hast my pardon.

BASIL.

Great tears, back!

(*After a pause.*)

I have that to say . . . . .

*Enter TURNKEY with a STRANGER, whose countenance  
and form are enveloped in a mantle.*

[*Exit* TURNKEY.]

BASIL.

What wouldst?

STRANGER.

Guiltless, you are to suffer for attempted homicide.

WALSINGHAM.

How know you he is guiltless?

STRANGER.

I was present.

BASIL.

Thou !

STRANGER.

Ay, and can produce the true delinquent.

WALSINGHAM.

And wilt thou ?

STRANGER.

Therefore am I here.

BASIL.

His name !

STRANGER.

Bligh !

BASIL.

Gracious God ! where breathes that wretched man ?

STRANGER (*throwing off his disguise*).

Dear injured benefactor ; at thy feet !

(*BLIGH casts himself on the ground.*)

BASIL.

Poor wretch ! How couldst thou ?

WALSINGHAM.

Man, whoe'er thou art,

Expound this mystery.

BLIGH (*rising*).

(*To BASIL.*)

Once upon a time you may remember, at least I do, sir, that when I assaulted . . . no matter!—my wife and child . . . their lives! . . .

Think you, I'll let you be exiled for me?

Not so bad as that!

BASIL.

Bligh, you were not alone . . .

BLIGH (*doggedly*).

What is that to you? I came not hither to accuse others. I am sole guilty.

(*With energy.*)

*There* I stick, though an angel from heaven gave me the lie.

WALSINGHAM (*in a broken voice*).

Come nearer!

BASIL.

Father!

(*Aside.*) It is nature wakes!

WALSINGHAM (*in agitation*).

There is a stranger guest here in my bosom,  
I know not well to name . . . *my son, my son!*

BASIL (*with exulting emotion aside*).

Gladness o'erwhelms me!

WALSINGHAM (*in a broken voice*).

I have much injured thee!

BASIL.

Faith! not at all, . . . not at all.

WALSINGHAM (*with deep emphasis*).

But *I have*, high-hearted boy !

My dear, wronged Philip . . . bless thee !

*Enter* TURNKEY, ATTENDANT, and others.

ATTENDANT (*seizing upon* BLIGH).

The very man ! A pretty chase from his lordship's to your lurking-place, and thence hither.

BLIGH.

Impelled into a snare ! Lordship ! What lordship ?

ATTENDANT.

Our noble master, Earl Lewis, at whose mansion we first got scent of you. You will please to accompany us to our employer.

BLIGH (*aside*).

I must curse him, though it be in a whisper.

*No retribution ?*

(*After a pause, aloud.*)

I would confer with Mr. Walsingham, in private, ere I be taken before a magistrate.

WALSINGHAM (*to* ATTENDANT).

Await me without, with your prisoner.

TURNKEY (*to* BASIL).

You are to be removed to the hulks, and will be permitted to see your friends but once more.



BLIGH (*to ATTENDANT*).

You have but forestalled my purpose.

(*Aside.*)

That hellish Earl! (*Raises his arms in horror.*)

[*Exeunt* BLIGH, ATTENDANT, TURNKEY, &c. &c.]

WALSINGHAM.

Oh, my declining days! Your dear girl might have  
Smoothed down . . . (*Breaks off.*)

BASIL.

*May yet.* But now, sir, I would have you  
Depart. When next you visit me, bring with you  
The child herself.

You shake in every limb.

(*Tenderly.*)

Let *me* be your support!—Lean on my arm!

WALSINGHAM (*in a convulsed voice*).

Thy noble heart! *Poor Philip!* . . . I'd rest there!

(*Throws himself into his son's arms, who strains him to  
his bosom.*)

BASIL.

Dear father!

(*The scene closes.*)

END OF ACT FOURTH.

## ACT V.

## SCENE I.

*BLIGH's attic: the same as the First of First Act.*

*BLIGH and MRS. BLIGH.*

BLIGH.

I thought the information I held out would bring Earl Lewis to my lure.

MRS. BLIGH.

What wild impulse in the mean time drove you to Newgate?

BLIGH.

I could not rest till I eased my mind by seeing Basil.

MRS. BLIGH.

It has turned out happily. But do not frustrate the object of Walsingham in deferring your caption until after this conference. Speak to purpose.

BLIGH.

I tell you what, wife,—if it were not for his lordship's perfidy, in indicating my whereabouts to his myrmidons, I would scorn to . . .

MRS. BLIGH (*interrupting*).

I hear the Earl's step.

BLIGH.

Mr. Horace?

MRS. BLIGH.

He waits my signal in Basil's chamber.

Miss Rosetta is abroad with Walsingham.

If aught goes wrong, this pistol I have loaded.

(*Takes the pistol down from the mantel-shelf: a tap at the door is heard.*)

Earl Lewis!

*Enter* EARL LEWIS.

EARL LEWIS.

Ah, Mr. Bligh!

We can dispense with your presence, my good madam.

MRS. BLIGH (*aside to* BLIGH).

For all the world speak out.

BLIGH (*aside to* MRS. BLIGH).

Notwithstanding,—only his own lips shall spring the mine of his destruction.

[*Exit* MRS. BLIGH.]

EARL LEWIS (*bolting the door*).

'Tis as well to guard against intrusion.

Your return is an ugly business, Mr. Bligh, which I must somehow shape for you. How dost?

BLIGH.

Thanks to your lordship, as down in the mouth as a small poet conning his publisher's bill, or a brewer's drayman turned teetotaller, or a Director in the grand . . .

EARL LEWIS (*interrupting*).

'T is your own madness that pulls trouble on you.  
But you are fraught with tidings which import  
My weal or woe.

BLIGH.

The son of Walsingham ?

EARL LEWIS.

His . . . that son's daughter ?

BLIGH.

But your Countess ?

EARL LEWIS.

Soon

Eternal night will spread her sable wing  
To shut her from my hate. Her cousin then . . .

BLIGH (*interrupting*).

That discarded son is Basil himself, my lord.

EARL LEWIS.

I thought 't was raving.

In his child's alliance  
My tortured soul, torn on the rack of doubt,  
Were pacified with ingots. For himself . . .

(*After a pause.*)

Can you tell me what chance brought Basil . . .

(HORACE, MRS. BLIGH, and others, appear at the grated attic casement, which is open: they make a sign to BLIGH.)

BLIGH (*aside*).

Now to this upshot!

(*Aloud.*)

Ay, my lord, how came he?

EARL LEWIS.

'Tis an enigma to me.

BLIGH.

Come, come, my lord, Truth is a naked lady, and shows all. In the bed-room there was none other, excepting Heaven's all-piercing eye, to witness our covert guilt; but that may yet flash detection.

EARL LEWIS.

Your motive for having drawn back at such a point?

BLIGH.

Why, my lord, you never mentioned *whom* I was hired to strike a corpse before me.

There live kin to Walsingham, individuals to whom I am vastly indebted: and, truth to say,—I know not how,—it is very foolish,—but gratitude is native here.

(*Touches his heart.*)

EARL LEWIS (*aside*).

The drivelling fool!

(*Aloud.*) Thy enormous recompense should have hushed such scruples.

BLIGH.

Your lordship may say what you will; but that you required is abhorrent to man's nature. When through the gloom his venerable form met my view, the sword slipped from my hand. I cannot paint that stormy transition! I moved away with the suddenness of lightning. But thou wast bolder?

EARL LEWIS.

And had been more prosperous; only, as if bent to mar my purpose, you eclipsed the passage light! On all around dropped sudden darkness. Surprised, the weapon swerved. The old man faintly shrieked; and, methought, steps sounded near—so I walked off.

BLIGH.

Resolve me one thing, my lord—How did you reconcile it to your noble honour, when you knew yourself to be the delinquent, to set certain of your people upon my trail?

EARL LEWIS.

Mr. Bligh, I am incapable . . .

BLIGH.

There's no use laying marble colours on your rotten actions. 'T was from your mansion . . .

EARL LEWIS.

My officious countess must have overheard your wife! and . . . *her threatening scrawl is solved*. When I discover her retreat, I'll make short work—*(after a pause)*—But how? You are at liberty!

BLIGH (*in confusion*).

I fear, my lord, it does not depend upon me any longer to hide this matter.

EARL LEWIS.

In durance or at large, I feel assured of your strict fidelity.

BLIGH (*hesitatingly*).

If I had supposed they had been Lady Lewis's emissaries . . . I had never connived, that within ear-shot . .

EARL LEWIS (*startled*).

What?

(*BLIGH furtively and slowly looks towards the case-ment: the Earl follows the direction of his eyes, and perceives he must have been overheard.*)

EARL LEWIS (*fiercely*).

All my schemes air?

Pernicious wretch! I will not avenge my ruin with empty curses, but rush into thy life!

(*As he utters the last words, the Earl draws a dirk from his stick, with which he rushes at BLIGH, who, seizing the stick, eludes the thrust, and struggles with him.*)

BLIGH (*in a tone of appeal*).

No one to assist me?

MRS. BLIGH.

Quick! descend, I pray . . .

Save, save my husband!

*[Exeunt HORACE and the others from the casement.*

*(The struggle continued : violent noise at the door.)*

BLIGH.

Bolted!

MRS. BLIGH *(with a scream)*.

Burst the door!

BLIGH.

The pistol, wife!

EARL LEWIS.

Thou cause of my destruction!

Down to the . . .

*(The Earl raises his arm to strike; BLIGH, slipping on one side, runs towards the door, closely followed by the Earl. The door is being burst open; the dirk all but touches BLIGH's throat.)*

BLIGH *(exclaims)*.

Fire!

*(Mrs. BLIGH fires.)*

*(Earl LEWIS is shot, and falls: the door is opened: HORACE and others, with OFFICERS of JUSTICE enter.)*

*(Presently enter Mrs. BLIGH.)*



EARL LEWIS (*in a feeble voice*).

Ha! I am deadly sick!

*Enter the COUNTESS, who, tremblingly, advances.*

EARL LEWIS (*perceiving the COUNTESS*).

(*Bitterly.*)

*My countess!* so!—'t is clear!

'T is *she* has enmeshed me,

Then vengeance!

HORACE (*to the COUNTESS*).

Isabel! what wondrous chance

Hath brought *thee* here?

EARL LEWIS (*in an expiring voice*).

Some goodness ere I'm driven...

THE COUNTESS (*approaching EARL LEWIS*).

Alas! my lord, the love which at the altar  
Was lit, I thought extinguished; but this sight  
Blows into flame the embers.

EARL LEWIS (*in faint and dying accents*).

Gentle creature!

My heart is changed. Thy hand in sign of pardon!  
Vouchsafe this boon, I'll bless thee in my passage.

(*The COUNTESS leaning over him extends her hand,  
which EARL LEWIS grasps, and suddenly shortening  
his poniard.*)

Think not, perfidious! o'er my tomb to exult.  
There, take my blessing!—DEATH!

Attend thy husband!

(*With feeble aim he wounds the neck of the COUNTESS,  
who falls in HORACE's arms.*)

HORACE (*wrenching his weapon*).  
Oh, execrable wretch!

EARL LEWIS.  
I'm in a mist;  
But, past his suburbs, death will 'lighten me.

(EARL LEWIS *dies*.)

HORACE.  
His feeble thrust has scarcely razed thy skin.

COUNTESS.  
Which marks me for the grave.  
That steel was venomed.  
This agony is mortal.

Hideous phantom,  
Lewis! He winds me in his arms. Oh, shield me!  
He drags me down . . the tyrant!  
Bear my burthen  
Back to Rosetta's couch. That's well.

HORACE (*tenderly*).  
Dear sister!

THE COUNTESS.  
On the grave's serious verge forgotten slidings . . . .  
My spirit sinks!

(*In a hollow voice of horror*.)

Let not my corpse lie near him!

[*Exit THE COUNTESS, supported by HORACE.*]

BLIGH.  
Heard you everything?

## OFFICER OF JUSTICE.

The whole process is taken down. The judge, already instructed by Mr. Walsingham as to Basil's innocence in respect to the book, hath interposed to reprove him. He will be liberated.

## MRS. BLIGH.

Oh, should the ship have sailed!

## OFFICER.

The party will have slipped his chains in any case, for death hath sealed him his.—You must both of you to the magistrate.

## BLIGH.

I'll first take forth this body . . .

[*Exeunt*:—BLIGH bearing the body of EARL LEWIS.

(*The scene closes.*)

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## SCENE II.

*The deck of a convict ship off Woolwich. Scenery of the Thames.*

## BASIL.

Opinion's but a fool, that vainly judges  
By outward show, and man's dejected nature

Of flaws within his heart, though wrought to fit him  
For glory in reversion.

Chastened sore,  
Visited hard by fortune ; the event  
Is but deferred, when all must own the exile,  
Branded and sentenced for a manslayer,  
Did in the flesh discern beneath the horizon  
The dawn of Heaven, and forestall its peace.

(*A pause.*)

If these refractive rays of an hereafter,  
Albeit coloured as they pass, befool us,  
Inherent in our reason, the Creator  
Hath wrought deception, bribing us through life  
With the idea, that what appears imperfect,  
Designed so, would, all things being consummated,  
Ensue a scheme Almighty. Mockery !  
If, ere that test—worse fated than the worm,  
Whose instincts serve him truly, and whose scene  
Of sense no curses shadow,—man were plunged  
In dark oblivion, wholly smirched the ray,  
The will-o-the-wisp, he blinked at through earth's mire,  
And took for sign of Heaven !

Past belief,  
Responsibility were made intuitive  
To a lot unequal and irregular,  
Distort by ignorance, injustice, malice,  
With mutability (contentment's bane !)  
The sovereign over all, were life extinguished  
Without amends, punishment ! . . dropt the curtain  
On the eventful scene . . . the piece unfinished !  
So never an all-just artificer  
Worked, not compelled !

The act's to come hereafter  
Will point the *moral* rightly.

Long conversant

With fiery trials, I regard my state  
 As more acceptable on high than shown  
 By wealth or nobleness, which time and chance  
 May rot and darken ; whilst the amaranth,  
 Sacred to doomsday, girts all heaven-born grief,  
 Making a man a god !

The vain disturbance  
 That nature works and sin, I tranquil view ;  
 For far off in the mist I can behold  
 The dry bones quicken, which, unto my soul,  
 Brings more content in course of true delight  
 Than to be thirsty after tottering honour,  
 Or, like a corpse, in cloth of state enshrouded,  
 Be 'balm'd and treasured through this night of time,  
 That in the perfect day, when blows the frame  
 Into life's flower again, my naked heart  
 Might crack for woe eternal !

I am admonished,  
 By winter's icy touch within my veins,  
 I shall not voyage to the land of shame,  
 And toil, and crime to find a grave ; but sleep  
 Well 'neath the earth I love.

Athwart the river,  
 Breaking the still flow of the tide, yon bark  
 Glides towards this vessel. As those heaving waves  
 Are what they bear for vanity. They roll  
 Before *his* eyes who moved upon them first,  
 Emblems of mortal trouble, doomed to chafe,  
 And foam, and toss their heads beneath the wind  
 Which drives them onward, till at once they settle  
 In the majestic calm.

The oar hath dropt  
 From out the rower's hand.

My sire and sister !

*Enter WALSINGHAM and ROSETTA.*

ROSETTA.

Dear father ! on my knees, I bless the light  
I see you by again.

BASIL (*folding her in his arms*).

Let me prevent

Thy tears, at least in part.

ROSETTA (*gazing intently at BASIL*).

What spectral beauty

Usurps the natural tint ?

WALSINGHAM (*apart*).

No soul weeps for me ! The world is nothing but a  
wilderness of wolves !

And I'm a wretched species all alone,  
Misfortune-finished model !

BASIL.

Father, your hand : 't is chill !—Where roam your thoughts ?

WALSINGHAM.

With *thee* over the ocean . . . with that child,  
Thousands of miles away ! Take mercy on me !

BASIL.

Horace will stay with you, and Isabel,—  
Lord Lewis . . .

WALSINGHAM.

I could read, since I was young,  
Mankind's hard hearts.

Much duty from the Earl !

Isabel's mind 's infirm,—nor she, nor Horace,  
A sullen, God-forsaken, blind old man

Cares for.—Why should they? Ah! to yearn as I do  
Without response for sympathy! Behold,  
Ye that have eyes, the end of Walsingham's labours!

BASIL (*with solemn earnestness*).

'Tis nature's stern adjustment. When we sow  
Misanthropy, revenge, how should we reap  
The fruits of charity? The hope wherein  
Ambition centred;—*wealth* that knew no bounds,  
Hath to the full fruition, for success,  
While envy sickened, grew to be with you  
A rightful worship, but your aims to subject  
To aught, lying *out of* sense mere superstition.  
At length, quite surfeited with pride of life,  
You yearn for *sympathy*;—to compass which,  
From my bare branches the last leaf of promise  
You'd strip, despite my torture . . . I!—*your son!*  
AND ALL FOR SYMPATHY!

(*After a pause.*)

There is a page  
In the history of man you blunder through,  
Malgre your skill, so know but half his nature,  
Accounting him, at best, a thing of velvet,  
At worst of tatters; yet this last may shine  
So radiant in severest honesty,  
Shall speak him little lower than the angels,  
*Though he went naked.*

Read the heart, indeed!

Had you read *mine*!

WALSINGHAM.

The old romance!

But Philip,

Leave me behind, Rosetta.

God of fathers!

Keep guard upon his safety, and show mercy  
As he is pitiful !

I'm proud and feeble,  
And scarcely can my untoward knees drop thus.

(*Kneels suddenly.*)

'Tis life or death . . . hush ! not yet . . .

Now, a breath ! . .

Thy sentence, righteous Judge !

BASIL.

You wrong your age

To kneel to me.

(*Raises WALSINGHAM.*)

WALSINGHAM (*to ROSETTA*).

I turn to *thee*, Rosetta ;

Thou'rt ever full of pity. Think, you see  
My freedom lost through dotage, and Earl Lewis  
Trampling upon my patience.

Next behold me

Wailing in sighs, and every soul fall'n off ;  
Then, as my last sand drops, imagine that  
I sink into the grave of my afflictions.  
So as my better angel wilt thou stay,  
Circling my relics with thy wings of love !

BASIL (*to ROSETTA, in a broken voice*).

Tears bubble up too hot !

His wane of age !

(*BASIL turns away in deep emotion.*)

WALSINGHAM.

My own, good son !

(*To ROSETTA.*) Love, pity, soothe, relieve me !



ROSETTA (*looking at WALSINGHAM*).  
Heaven guide me right!

(*She casts her eyes from WALSINGHAM to BASIL, then  
back to WALSINGHAM.*)

Both weeping?

(*After an agonized pause, suddenly to WALSINGHAM.*)

Dear revered!  
Though Heaven's last thunder shook, He is my father!  
I must not quit his side . . . Forgive and pity!

WALSINGHAM.

Of course!—You think I'll chide? Not I!—*I* whine not.  
Thank Heaven; *I* despair!

ROSETTA.

Keep firm his brain!

WALSINGHAM (*to ROSETTA*).

We two must part. I will home; lest life and wits  
Conclude calamity too soon.

BASIL.

Be patient!

WALSINGHAM.

No, I'll exclaim and terrify the earth  
With this hoar image of distress.

One light me!

My sight is none of the best!

Thou merchant-river!

Let thy waves hide my woes! Mausoleum,

Meet for a merchant sovereign !

I cast off

My dregs of suffering . . . these time-withered limbs !

(*Rushes forward.*)

BASIL (*interposing*).

Beseech thee, sir, affront not Heaven,—whose angels . . .

WALSINGHAM (*breaking in*).

Came they in legions, like my griefs, they could not  
Lighten the weight that's *here* ; though trooped along  
One erring as themselves, with shape voluptuous,  
Adown whose polished neck the sunbeams quiver,  
Like hair, whose tangles I . . . The smiling hours  
Danced to the music of thy voice, *my wife* !  
Those times ! It seems more strange than they have  
been,

That I am alive to bring back to my view  
The wasted glass which own'd them. Fled my rosebud ?  
With what humility would I observe thee,  
Could I redeem the past ! I looked not *thus*  
When first we met ! I thought not to end so ;  
Blind . . brain-sick . . feeble . . all alone i' the world !

BASIL.

Not all alone. I told you that your wife,  
Within four months of the day ye parted, died ;—  
The date her tomb attests—She was released  
In pains maternal ; and the baptism  
Of her fair infant certifies ——

WALSINGHAM.

What sayest ?

Oh ! loud as thunder triumphs, sound again

Walsingham's not left issueless! My ears!  
Starve them not! . . . Awful dream!

*(After a pause, beseechingly.)*

Some crutch to lean on!

BASIL.

Is it no more to give thy soul content  
Than say, you have a daughter . . . . .

WALSINGHAM.

Heaven bless her!  
Measureless comfort propp'd by filial arms  
Be mine!—Where is she? . Quick!

BASIL *(solemnly)*.

The pride be thanked,  
And courage, which the pure and dove-like spell  
Of her untainted age inspired me with,  
That all the skill my muse could whisper me,  
And all the zeal enthusiasm lent me,  
And all the tenderness my nature taught me,  
Were lavished to secure her from the troubles  
Which gather closely on the steps of time.  
Thus watched I o'er her; while, as from a compass,  
She still, efformed by my example, steered  
Her innocent actions; till my travail raised  
A candidate for the enduring portion  
Laid up for goodness; and—

*(Taking ROSETTA by the hand.)*

Still more I strove,  
With the whole duty of my soul, the nearer  
She grew to womanhood.

ROSETTA *(to BASIL with broken voice)*.

This stop of the heart!  
My father . . . father?

BASIL.

Behold him *there*! Canst doubt me?

To his heart!

(ROSETTA *rushes to the embrace of* WALSINGHAM.)WALSINGHAM (*in astonished agitation*).Son! Speak one word! Is it possible? Thou hast  
roused

A whirlwind in my soul which roots up reason.

What hast thou said? This angel? . . .

BASIL (*emphatically*).

Is my sister!

You clasp your proper issue . . . and Rosetta's,  
Who conned her prayers, and learned her filial duty  
At my knees, father. She shall smooth thy pillow  
When I lie out of sight; . . . life-sacrifice,  
That makes my great work perfect!

WALSINGHAM.

Still my solace?

My joy! my *very* staff! . . . Love, welcome home!

(Embraces her.)

ROSETTA.

My soul awoke before thee all along!

WALSINGHAM.

'T is truth contestless!

Lead me to my son,

That in his filial foldings! . . .

WALSINGHAM (*falls into the arms of* BASIL).

Now my joys,

Too vast for words, fix heaven within my heart,

While thus in extacies my fond arms thank you!

ROSETTA (*to* BASIL).

Oh, more than earthly parent! fit to walk  
The light of yonder hills! Thou guardian brother!  
In pious instinct I could bare my head,  
And kiss thy feet, for where thou tread'st is holy!

BASIL.

Up to thy native seat, child!

Bless ye both!

*Enter* HORACE (*hurriedly*).

HORACE (*to* WALSINGHAM).

Dear sir, I bring you peace in mournful tidings,—  
My sister and Earl Lewis are no more.

WALSINGHAM.

What's that?

HORACE.

My lord confessed, he perpetrated  
The abortive deed for which your son is condemned—  
The reversal of whose sentence is at hand.

WALSINGHAM.

Too much! I am entranced! I fain would sleep.

BASIL.

This is a baby's heart!

(*He turns aside, and covers his face with his hands.*)

ROSETTA (*approaching* BASIL).

Your eyes appal me!  
They glare . . . Oh, *how* they glare!

BASIL (*solemnly*).

Death's being enthroned!

WALSINGHAM.

Thou pulse of my old heart! (*Takes BASIL by the hand.*)

BASIL (*to WALSINGHAM*).

You now perceive  
Why I Rosetta's union interdicted.

WALSINGHAM.

No need to gainsay! . . . Horace, Isabel,  
Neither are kin of mine. They were adopted,  
Through wrath to thee, my heirs in infancy.

BASIL.

Their marriage? . . .

WALSINGHAM.

I confirm it with my blessing!

BASIL (*to HORACE*).

Horace, she is thine!

No nearer!

When I am cold,

Dare not this maid's entangling arms untwine  
As, of a piece almost, she clasps me, save  
You'll love and cherish her as I . . . Not so,  
Yet cherish her! . . . . Now swear!

HORACE (*raising his hands*).

Till death!

BASIL.

That oath

I'll bear!

With yonder stars find room my soul!

WALSINGHAM (*his mind wandering*).

What says my son?  
Mild ever from a boy, and add to that  
Patient beyond his years, as if to show  
How much we are immortal, when by care  
Taught conduct, self-exalting. I have known him  
O' tip-toe slip into my chamber, thinking  
I slept, and, kneeling by my side, he'd sob;  
And when I asked the matter? . . . *Oh! Oh! Oh!*  
If I were given to talk, I'd paint a heart  
The model of the heavens! Philip, leave me!

(*Seizing the arm of BASIL.*)

Thou seest my memory's sound . . .

How say'st? no more!

Peace, fool! to thy repose! thy lips are breathless,  
Chill!

Down to rest,—*thou'lt sleep well in the dark!*

*Enter OFFICER.*

OFFICER.

The utmost limit of thy time is expired.

*Enter MESSENGER.*

ROSETTA (*eagerly*).

No!

From his mouth I hear the words of mercy.

(*To MESSENGER.*)

Why speak not?

MESSENGER (*to OFFICER*).

A reprieve! . . . the transport Basil!

ROSETTA.

Catch the blest sounds, ye choirs of saints ! He 's free !

(MESSENGER gives the written order to OFFICER.)

OFFICER (to BASIL, after glancing his eyes over it).  
Thou stand'st as if this charge had never chanced.

BASIL (in a tone of indignant surprise).

Sir ? (After a pause, mournfully.)

When thou canst replace upon a rose  
The dew-drops shaken thence, thou may'st establish  
My body and soul again !

(Breaking off.) For my reprieve,  
'T is yonder ! Lo ! my blood forsakes my heart.

(BASIL sinks to the floor.)

WALSINGHAM.

I know it all—do n't tell me . . . Oh ! was ever  
Father so exquisitely blest ? I'll settle  
This day twelve hundred thousand pounds upon thee ;  
'T will draw down fame like incense !

BASIL (abstractedly).

(Rising on one knee.) Sound extatic !

That tak'st with ravishment the ears of Death,  
Suspending heaven !

Thou canst, feathery Fame !

My soul's remotest regions pierce as air,  
That sings with piercing, but can ne'er avail  
This wreck of storms, left powerless as a sail  
Hanging in breathless calm !

WALSINGHAM.

What dreams he of ?



ROSETTA (*in a voice of anguish*).

A live-long dream, alas! unrealized,—  
*The tomb will fall on him without his name!*

BASIL.

*There praise doth send no echo!*

Ha! my eyelids!

(*To ROSETTA.*)

Stoop down and seal them!

Death will sphere my soul

In light!

Where . . .

(*To ROSETTA.*) Where's your blessed hand?

(*ROSETTA gives her hand.*) Live happy!

Nor own a pain I cannot share or cure.

ROSETTA.

*Father!* How feeblest?

BASIL.

Well!—Oh, never better!

For my heart breaks—to find . . . Remember me!

Have I your hand? (*Kisses her hand.*)

ROSETTA.

What tenderness like this!

BASIL.

'T is the last time! (*He sinks down.*)

ROSETTA (*clinging to BASIL.*)

Oh! must this woe be borne?

BASIL.

Put on your shawl . . . Wrap up, child.

*Cold, cold air !*

(BASIL *dies*.)

(ROSETTA *throws herself on the body of BASIL*.)

HORACE.

Weep not ! The Poet passes, not expires !

WALSINGHAM (*in a voice of exultation*).

Do you hear me ? Come thy ways : your sister waits you. Shalt share with her, Philip, all I am worth in the world. *No more romance though*—that's a good boy ! But let us home !

Who would not be a father ?

*The curtain falls.*

END OF PHILIP BASIL.



REMARKS  
UPON THE PRESENTATION OF THE TRAGEDY OF  
MARTINUZZI,  
ACTED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL LYCEUM, IN THE MONTHS  
OF AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1841.  
WITH  
ELUCIDATIVE NOTICES OF THE PRESS.



## REMARKS,

&c.

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THE many difficulties "almost inseparable from a first night's performance" of any new drama, were especially enhanced in weight and number by peculiar and unprecedented circumstances that attended the presentation of the tragedy of "*Martinuzzi*."

The play only received a reading in the green-room a week previous to its being put upon the stage, and the rehearsals, partly owing to the house not coming into the possession of the Author till the very day of the performance, were few and interrupted. It can scarcely, therefore, be a matter of wonder, amid the almost unanimous plaudits with which the performance was continually honoured, and the prolonged excitement displayed after the fall of the curtain, not merely on the first but on subsequent nights, as the subjoined notices from the press testify and establish, that manifestations of an opposite nature did now and then break forth,

falling upon passages which were for the most part the result of gross and wilful misinterpretation, or which, sometimes, were made ridiculous by the untoward circumstances unavoidably incident to the putting a production upon the boards *without sufficient preparation*.

But truly there *is* a considerable difference, when we think of it, between the bringing out in modern days a well-known tragedy of olden times, and a new one of an unknown author. The former has been read by everybody . . . it has been criticised by the greatest writers of successive periods . . . and the characters are defined and established . . . the stage-business has been handed down with "the rendering of the part;" there has been the study and practice of some twenty years (*not hours*) of those who enact them; and, finally, it is listened to with profound respect, by reason of all sorts of associations, circumstances, and "foregone conclusions." In this case an audience comes prepared to admire all the good they find; in the case of a new tragedy, especially on a first night, there are always many who come only to discover its faults. Every feeling with which an old-established tragedy is consecrated we find reversed in the judgments too often formed of a new one. Yet the latter is, nevertheless, required to be so perfectly armed and appointed, on the very first night of its nervous appearance, that it shall present no tangible mark for ridicule to the severest critics; nor, far worse, *the watchful senses of parties, or cliques, who may be interested in its failure*.

It was not from any overweening estimate of his own production . . . it was no personal point of vanity . . . still less was it any pecuniary consideration, that made

the Author of "*Martinuzzi*" cast his humble reputation on the die.

Right or wrong, it was conceived by many at that juncture, that the necessity, the interest, of the dramatic poet and the English stage required the unacted dramatists to take up some such independent position as that which (finding no other party disposed to enter the breach),

" Against his better judgment not convinced,  
But fondly overcome,"

he assumed, with the sole aim of enlarging the arena.

The case sought to be established was determined affirmatively by the impartial verdict of twenty-seven successive audiences, as recorded below.

Diverse reports and opinions, however, are abroad in respect to the success of the enterprise, since, among very many handsome and encomiastic notices, a portion of the press thought themselves warranted in dealing by the Author with severity, misapprehending his motives, and making no allowance for the shameful indiscretions, ludicrous interpolations, defective deliveries, and faulty memories, real or assumed for the nonce, of the personators of his characters.

To have carried through the piece in the manner detailed in the notices from the press appended to these remarks, with its original construction warped, disjointed, tortured, and mangled on every hand, *by all but the Author*, and despite the many disadvantages touched upon above, besides others inseparable from so bold and sudden a step as that he adopted, surely serves to indi-



cate the perfect triumph which, under the more judicious auspices and experienced skill of Mr. Macready, the several parts being not so cast as to be continually playing at false purposes and *contretemps*, must have crowned the representation of "*Martinuzzi*."

Even, however, of those critics who, despite the "applause, enthusiasm, and excitement" they faithfully chronicle (which were displayed, it should be noted, in as great a degree on after nights), took an adverse, and perhaps a prejudiced view of the merits of "*Martinuzzi*" as an acting play, a few mingled very noble and generous praise with their strictures.

The author has already, in the second edition of the play, expressed his grateful sense of the kind discrimination evinced by the gentleman who so ably adorns the office of theatrical reviewer to "THE TIMES." "THE MORNING HERALD" preserved an ambiguous silence, which is and was attributed to the good nature of the critic forbearing to deliver the sentence which, perhaps, a too severe judgment prompted.

For the pretension, flummery, and tom-foolery which for antecedent weeks harbingered the performance of "*Martinuzzi*," since the pre-arrangements and management were, to all intents and purposes, taken out of his control and decision, the Author ought not to be held accountable. "The opponents naturally created" (to quote a subsequent criticism) "by the tone of challenge and defiance blown abroad, together with interested opponents, are quite enough to explain the hostile *animus* afterwards displayed by a portion of the audience."

The affair presented a glorious game to the quick scent

of "PUNCH," which he followed up with characteristic humour; albeit, if the diatribes here referred to *were* indeed penned (as has been affirmed) by a brother play-writer, and the staff of "*Punch*" can boast of more than one votary of the drama, they were certainly conceived neither in good taste nor right feeling. Be that as it may, it would be silly in a man to feel angry at the keenness of "*Punch*," even though he himself be made the anvil for the rogue to sharpen his wit on.

The author can assure "*Punch*," that he would have enjoyed his travesties mightily if he had not been a little mistrustful of the *animus* which dictated them.

As a specimen of "*Punch's*" critiques on "*Martinuzzi*," the following may amuse.

"Castaldo appears in truth a very bad barber of murders, for as he is rushing out to —

'Strike the tyrant down—in crimson stains:  
Rend every nerve!'

Isabella has the shrewdness to discover that he is without a weapon. Important omission! The incipient assassin exclaims—

'Oh, that I had my sword!'

but at that moment (clever dramatic contrivance!), Enter CZERINA *with a drawn sword*.

'CZERINA. There 's one! thine own!'

Far from being grateful for this opportune supply of ways and means, Castaldo calls the bilbo a fatal aspic, upon the edge of which his eye-balls crack to look!

Again—"The poison makes Martinuzzi exceedingly uncomfortable in the stomachic regions—he is quite sure—

'That hath been done to me which sends me starward;'

but he evidently loses his way, for he ends the play by enquiring—

‘Where is the world?’

When the curtain fell there arose an uproarious shout for the author, but instead of the mantle of the Elizabethan poets, which it has been said he commonly wears, the most attractive garment that met the view was an expansive white waistcoat.”

If not among the smartest raps of the rap we quote from, the above hits are at all events fair punches. But when the writer imputes to Mr. Stephens a mean purloining of flattering reviews,—“a purchasing of the trumpet of fame to puff himself into temporary notoriety,” *Punch* must surely perceive upon reflection, that he has crossed the line which separates the pleasant land of fun and drollery from the “antres vast” of malice and slander. It is but due to the Author of “*Martinuzzi*” to cite the following calumny for the purpose of contradiction:—

“The lavish outlay Mr. Stephens must have incurred to obtain such a number of favourable notices—so many columns of superlative praise—shows him to be utterly regardless of expense. The works 3rd and 4th upon our list (3rd, *Opinions of the Press upon various works by George Stephens*, 8vo., pp. 8 : 4th, *Opinions of the Press upon the dramatic merits of the Hungarian Daughter*, 8vo., closely printed, pp. 16) doubtless cost for the *copyright* alone in ready money a fortune.”

Neither the encomiums referred to, nor as many more, equally flattering, which might have been specified, ever cost in any shape a *single shilling*, and, moreover, to the best of the Author’s belief, with the exception of two or three brother dramatists to whom he has had the honour of being *consequently* introduced, he is personally utterly unknown to those numerous critics whose disinterested

motives for applauding his muse, however their "superlative praise," in *Punch's* opinion and the Author's, might be unmerited, it does not speak well for the immaculateness, charity, and liberal feeling of that Mephistopholean censor to have suspected even in a thought, much less publicly impugned.

The author of "*Martinuzzi*" felt at the time a little nervous anxiety as to what would be the report of "*THE ATLAS*" upon the phenomena of the night. It was unfavourable, but upon grounds with which the party most interested felt not disinclined to concur. A few lines will suffice.

"Who would not have gone with delight to a plain room to listen to dramatic poetry for its own sake, and then admiring, who would not have joined to force its production on the stage? Every one but these reformers of the stage. They take a magnificent poem, mangle it into an unmeaning drama, and so produce what they hold forth, and not unjustly, as something original and brilliant, under an aspect of common place, in a crippled and degraded form . . . Poetry in all her forms was wounded—the drama butchered—and the only good to be derived from the sacrifice is that the priests fell with the victim. They will never "dabble their hands in blood" again. We so lament the blow inflicted upon the "*Martinuzzi*" of Mr. Stephens, a poem of most unequal but undoubted beauty, and a promise not to be mistaken of dramatic power in the writer, as to prevent our entering into a detail of its representation."

"*THE EXAMINER*," a high dramatic authority, was likewise out of sympathy, and thus concludes a long notice;—

"We left the theatre not without the feeling, that if Mr. Stephens could only bring himself to imagine his foot on the first round of the ladder instead of the last, he need not despair of mounting to no contemptible eminence."

After more than four years' further cultivation of his theatrical taste, studying the technicalities of the scene *by guess*, this is the literal conclusion at which the Author of "*Martinuzzi*" has arrived in respect to his position. *All he asks is the ladder*; that provided him, he is quite content for the present with being conceded the lowest round on the scale.

He is fast falling "into the sere and yellow leaf." From whatever cause or combination of causes, in himself, or circumstances beyond his control, the aspiration of his life has not met with success,—his hope has not been fulfilled. *He has failed*. But he thanks the Disposer of all events,—yea, of a thing of so little moment as what may belong to a foolish play, or even to the writer—he thanks God in the very depths of his soul for having thus ordained it. Welcome cross!

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#### ELUCIDATIVE NOTICES OF THE PRESS UPON THE PERFORMANCE OF MARTINUZZI.

From *The Times*.

"There is tragic mind in all this. The idea of the Cardinal's situation, the man doomed to atone for the crimes of another, in spite of every virtue, and every endeavour to amend the injury which has been done, and who by every attempt merely forges for destiny a new weapon by which she may crush him, is eminently tragic. He stands elevated by an apparent power, the hollowness of which we perceive; we see it crumbling beneath his feet, till at last the haughty prelate is a grovelling suppliant at the feet of his own daughter. We are reminded of *Œdipus* on the tottering throne of Thebes. Mr. Stephens, in contriving the instrument of the downfall, though he has been singularly tedious in the earlier part of the drama, has displayed remarkable ingenuity and invention. The very selection of the innocent Castaldo as the perpetrator of an atrocity, shows originality of

mind. In his last scene he has been extravagantly prodigal of life; the characters are hurried away to the other world with a want of artifice that is strangely contrasted with the pains that have previously been taken to lead up to the catastrophe. This extravagance, however, belongs to an earlier state of the drama: George Stephens only sins in company with honest John Webster; and those who would smile at the development of the organ of destructiveness in the last scene of "*Martinuzzi*," would probably grow facetious on Vittoria Corombona, if she did not come before us sanctified with the stamp of nearly three centuries.

"Mr. Stephens has written, in the course of his drama, lines worthy of any dramatist. The expiring words of Martinuzzi,—'*Where is the world?*' the idea of the aged prelate, who has been accustomed to be one of earth's rulers, and who has now raised his thoughts to a higher sphere, conceiving that the world is passing from him, not he from the world, is one of the highest efforts of the sublime. We might select passages replete with fervour and beautiful poetry, had we room for extracts.

"Genius there is; for, be it remembered, there is nothing like weakness about George Stephens. His ideas are vast; and when he rumbles through unmusical metres, and builds extravagant images, it may be a misdirection of power, but it is power still. He is really in earnest. He will strike out, and would rather hazard an absurdity than flinch in his path. His admirers have called him a true son of the Elizabethan age, and we are not sure that his daring invention, his vigour, and even his faults, do not entitle him to claim the consanguinity.

"From an unfortunate anti-climax that was uttered about the middle of the piece, the audience caught an unlucky humour, and a constant disposition to seize on the ridiculous side of everything was manifest to the end. Some scenes arrested the unlucky tendency, and the audience paused to applaud the highly affecting scene between the Cardinal and his daughter, as they had most of the earlier part of the drama, but the untragic humour was not to be thrown off altogether. The applause at the conclusion was most vociferous: the actors and Author were called for," &c. &c.

*From The Britannia.*

"The actors were not equal to the parts assigned them. The highest range of tragedy requires the highest and most finished style of acting. The introduction, too, of songs, which had no connection with the action of the drama, on a stage covered with green baize, though

rendered necessary by the license of the theatre, was an unpleasant novelty, and put the audience out of humour. Added to these unfavourable circumstances, a large party had come to the theatre for the express purpose of condemning the performances, and, with practised sharpness, seized upon those points most accessible to ridicule, to display the strength of their lungs by roars of laughter. Yet the genius of the Author triumphed: many of the scenes elicited those sudden, electric, and unanimous bursts of applause, which are the offspring of impulse, rather than of reflection, and one of the most gratifying and unequivocal tributes of admiration that can be paid to the powers of the Author. The tragedy is a study in itself, and we think will gain upon the public as it becomes more known. At the fall of the curtain the applause was loud and long continued."

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*From The Morning Post.*

"The cheers fell occasionally quick, thick, and heavy. Loud applauses crowned the conclusion. Mr. Phelps, Mrs. Warner, and the author were called for in succession. The latter acknowledged the compliment by bowing from a private box."

*From The Theatrical Chronicle.*

"We were glad to hear the very frequent and enthusiastic applauses of a crowded audience. We may instance as one unmistakeable testimony of the absorbing interest of '*Martinuzzi*,' that the songs, though most excellently sung, were listened to with impatience, such was the desire of the audience to witness the continuation of the play. The Author was long, loudly, and most perseveringly called for at the conclusion, and made his bows to the audience from one of the side boxes."

*From The City Chronicle.*

"The whole scene with his daughter, where, grovelling at her feet, *Martinuzzi* unravels the fatal secret, and wrings from her the assent to her marriage with *Sigismund*, and the deep revulsion of feeling—all were fine, as was the Cardinal's death, when, in the agony of fear and the blindness of body which is growing over dissolution, he asks, with a spirit groping through the darkness of the grave,—

'Where is the world?'

A passage and idea singly considered worthy of any living or dead author.

"The play richly deserved the emphatic bursts of applause that it received, *more especially on the second night of representation.*"

From *The Argus*.

"Mr. Stephens, the champion of the chivalrous squadron, fought out the battle upon the stage of the English Opera House, on Thursday night, and fought it right well. It is but just to extract a specimen of the bold and vigorous school in which Mr. Stephens has studied the eloquence of passion . . . If this be not good dramatic writing, we do not much care to know what is. The Cardinal's noble nature rises with each scene, and the audience's admiration is preserved to the last when he expires with the words, 'Where is the world?' The genius conspicuous in the work saved the play, in spite of the laughter which proceeded from a clique who had assembled in certain parts of the house for the express purpose of annoying the actors and damning the play. The production of this play is the first downright blow to the system which trades in names and not in plays."

From *The Morning Chronicle*.

"The scene in which Martinuzzi discovers to Czerina that she is his daughter, acted strongly upon the feelings of the audience, and several other passages were effective. The chief performers and the Author were called for at the end of the play."

From *The Globe*.

"Last night presented a scene of excitement at this theatre. A tragedy, entitled '*Martinuzzi*,' was performed, and met with great applause. We are bound to say that some of the performers ought to have known their parts better; or, at all events, not to have interpolated some of the strange things which made many laugh, but which are certainly not to be found in the printed tragedy before us. At times we heard the voice of the prompter almost as plainly as that of the performers. The tragedy was enthusiastically received by a crowded house. It is long since we have seen a pit so full and so unanimous. It is true, there were enemies in the house who betrayed themselves by the eagerness with which every word was caught at which could be turned into ridicule, even at the cost of assuming an indelicate meaning, which only the most gross minds could have associated with the text. All this was, however, very properly put down by the house, and the curtain fell amidst immense plaudits,



which lasted at least ten minutes, during which Mrs. Warner and Mr. Phelps were called to appear before the curtain ; and, finally, the Author bowed from a private box."

*From The Naval and Military Gazette.*

" As an acting drama '*Martinuzzi*' commanded attention. The impassioned parts awed and transfixed the hearer, and ever and anon some gentle or bold transition thrilled through the hearts of the audience. At the close of the performance Mr. Phelps and Mrs. Warner were loudly called for, and respectively came forward, and received the warm plaudits of the audience. The Author of the drama was called, and acknowledged, in one of the upper boxes, the cheers of the house."

*From New Bell's Messenger.*

" The tragedy of '*Martinuzzi*' was produced at this theatre on Thursday night, when the opinion pronounced of its dramatic qualities was confirmed by the verdict of an evidently intelligent audience. We rarely meet with such an assemblage of intellectual faces as appeared on the balcony on this occasion. The applause with which the piece was received was enthusiastic. Some singing that was introduced, in obedience to the Act of Parliament, was hissed by a portion of the audience, whose good humour, however, was restored by a gentleman of strong lungs in the upper boxes crying out, in a way that plainly indicated how deeply he felt interested in the cause of the unacted drama, 'What's the use of hissing the song? You know we must have it!' The play, as we have already stated, was greatly applauded, and Phelps, Mrs. Warner, and the Author received calls, after the fall of the curtain."

*From The Era.*

" Round after round of vociferous applause followed, and frequently anticipated each passage, and the curtain fell upon the dead and dying amid stentorian cheers, sufficient to have unroofed the theatre. The principal actors were called for, and the Author from the privacy of his box received the honours."

*From The Observer.*

"The house was very fully attended, and the play, which abounds in poetry and good thoughts, flowery as the fields of Enna, was encouraged with marked applause."

*From The Weekly Dispatch.*

"The play of '*Martinuzzi*' was produced. The subject is highly dramatic, far superior to some of those which constitute many of the plays of our first-rate writers. There are very excellent scenes in the play. The house was crowded, and the applause was great."

*From The Satirist.*

"As well may Mr. Stephens expect to write an acting tragedy without reference to stage rules, as to place his dramas in the hands of performers who enter without heart into a scheme that has no object of permanent advantage to them. The tragedy was placed on the stage in a mutilated form, and the characters personated by performers who embarked little mind and less heart in the cause, and even with these drawbacks, *we repeat, the play succeeded.* We left at the moment of high tragic excitement, while the pit was roaring for Phelps, and the boxes were crying for the Author."

*From The Literary Gazette.*

"'*Martinuzzi*' has gone on improving greatly upon audiences since its introduction to the stage, and the experiment of Mr. Stephens, tried under many adverse circumstances, will, we are persuaded, be productive of considerable benefits to the national drama. Authors have always had too little voice in what concerns them so much, and if they can open a fair stage for themselves and no favour, it may do much to qualify the monopolies which have hitherto interfered so much with their hopes and efforts. A visit to the English Opera House, before it closes, is due from the friends of the Drama to the poetical mind and feeling which pervade '*Martinuzzi*,' and evince the genius of the writer."

*From The Morning Advertiser.*

"The house was exceedingly well attended, and the performance of '*Martinuzzi*,' from first to last was honoured with ayes vehement."

From *The Britannia*.

"The performance of '*Martinuzzi*' has greatly improved since its first representation. It evidently gains favour as it becomes more known, and the prejudice which at first usually attaches to any composition of decided originality seems dying away. The house is nightly filled with a highly respectable and attentive audience."

From *The Theatrical Chronicle*.

"Let time and truth do their own work here! The cant of criticism—the worst of cant in this canting world—cannot oblivionize the proud stand Mr. Stephens has taken in tragic literature. He can well afford the emptiness, the hollowness of the dull-brained sarcasm with which his production has been assailed by the patent imbecility of partial critics,—men whose Sunday dinner is pending upon the brilliant inefficacy of downright falsehood—men whose sponge-like nastiness is nipped out of them by lop-sided and chuckle-headed opulence—men like these, may exhaust all their flimsy twaddle upon an honest and right-minded public, and but little damage, we opine, will be caused to the well-merited reputation that the play of '*Martinuzzi*' is destined to command. We say *command*, and we fearlessly repeat the word. The intense interest—the craving for a continuance of the dialogue when interrupted by the legal trammels upon tragedy—the impatience with which the songs are listened to—all tend to prove the indubitable truth of our assertion. Let sour-faced prejudice do her worst—the whole tribe of newspaper hacks cut up to order—let mercenary criticism vent its paid-for spleen—still will '*Martinuzzi*' command success—still will '*Martinuzzi*' ride triumphant upon public approbation. Every unprejudiced mind must class '*Martinuzzi*' among the first acting productions of the present day, and to those vile detractors who have been so forward in their paltry attempts to cry down the well-earned fame of Mr. Stephens, we can only repeat with *Martinuzzi*—

'For though thy venomous tongue love hissing  
Worse than a snake, and more malignant juice  
Drop from thy words than lurks within the teeth  
Of serpent creatures ;—I cannot choose but listen.'

"The deep silence which prevailed during the foregoing scene testified the high approbation which was working with the audience—a pause came, and then the agony of interest burst forth into the wildest

plaudits. All was again still, till at last the scene closed upon an enraptured audience."

From *The Lyre*.

"Many unprincipled persons had assembled for the express purpose of quarrelling, not with the play, but with the Author. Many of the sentiments and similes were derisively laughed at, which, if shielded by the magic name of Shakespeare, would have been applauded. Those who sneered at the words, 'Blush like a hell,' would, for the same reason condemn the line, 'Like a hell-broth boil and bubble;' but it was only sallow-faced fops, with perfumed pieces of cambric, and lemon kid gloves, who raised their 'sweet voices' against this first attempt at a *free stage and fair play*. We think that courtesy, could these frequenters of saloons and billiard tables know the meaning of the word, might have prevented an exhibition so disgusting—but Mr. Stephens was prejudged. The performance has continued during the week with very fair success. A portion of the weekly press has denounced Mr. Stephens's play as a failure—but '*Martinuzzi*' was not a failure. Examine first the *superficial* indications of success—was the play wanting in these? The applause at the close was universal, and the principal actors and the Author were summoned to receive the approbation of the audience. We know that these are not the highest tests of success; but they are by far the most general *criteria*. It happens too, that the first night *was the only one* during which the slightest disapproval was evidenced.

"But to the higher grounds of triumph. Never was the dignity of tragedy more reverently observed than in '*Martinuzzi*;' never was the distinction between its severe grandeur and the tricky theatricality of the five-act *melodrama* more strikingly apparent. Take, *ex. gr.* the scene in which Martinuzzi reveals himself to Czerina, as her father, the most effective scene in the play; how tenderly touching—how riveting the interest—what scope given to the actors—and yet there is no attempt at situation. Mere theatricality is entirely avoided. How devoid of all artificial point, and yet how simply beautiful is the language. Listen—

'Oh child, do not stab,  
With parricidal obstinacy, the being  
Whose pangs are locked, or should be locked, in the blood  
Which flows within thy veins. Indeed, thou knowest not  
How much he merits at thy filial hands;

His love, his providence, those thoughts which night  
 Doth shut down in her casket, and God opens;  
 His ceaseless orisons forestalling thine,  
 His anxious guidance, his undying cares.'

"Again; hear true poetry: not common thoughts decked out in gaudy phrase, nor antediluvian ideas rouged up to look like youth. All is fresh, sincere reality:—

'I must not leave  
 My honour lessening, through space and time,  
 When I within the far diviner gloom  
 Am wrapt, where lurks no falseness, no distrust;  
 Where storm, ambition, wakeful weariness,  
 Wrath, envy, travail not; with whose blind depths  
 Only God's eye is level, and where nothing  
 Reigns but what is not, save on every side,  
 Freedom, and silence, and eternal sleep.'

"This play contains more elements of tragedy, more genuine pathos, and more independence of the mere play-wright's trickery, than any that has been produced since the Elizabethan era. No doubt, in skill of construction, in the apt popularization of thought, and, above all, in knowledge of effects, Mr. Stephens has superiors. He has, however, written a great play, and one that will survive many productions now universally admired, because of their no where claiming the *highest order* of admiration."

*From The Theatrical Journal.*

"*'Martinuzzi'* is an admirable performance. The play runs smoothly on, the action gradually increasing to the fifth act, when the catastrophe takes place, and the curtain drops as the dying Cardinal apostrophises mortality and ejaculates,—'Where is the world?' We shall merely add that the performance on Thursday went off with great eclat."

*From The Argus.*

"The tragedy of *'Martinuzzi'* has been played every night to crowded and applauding houses, and the minor defects usually attendant on a first representation have disappeared. So has the *malicious* interruption to which we alluded last week. The play may now be pronounced to have completely succeeded."

*From The Weekly Chronicle.*

"The tragedy of '*Martinuzzi*' continues to be played every night to highly respectable and most attentive audiences. The bold undertaking of destroying the monopoly of the patent theatres, by playing a legitimate drama at a minor theatre, has hitherto proceeded with entire success.

"It has, of course, been subject to much opposition from interested parties; and many exaggerations and untruths, grounded upon certain discrepancies almost inseparable from a first night's performance, have done a degree of temporary mischief; but now that the performers have become 'mellowed down' in their parts, the tragedy gains ground with every representation."

*From The London Phalanx.*

"On Thursday evening was performed with complete success, a new tragedy called '*Martinuzzi*.' There are many splendid parts in this tragedy, but it will require some alteration to render it popular.

"This was partly owing to the very inferior manner in which all the characters were represented."

*From The Court Gazette.*

"The first wrong chord was struck by the orchestra, who, in obedience to the law, came forward to sing a song. The audience evidently did not approve of this taking their ears by storm.

"At the end of the piece, Mr. Phelps, Mrs. Warner, and the Author were successively called for; and the last, on his appearance in one of the upper boxes, was especially cheered."

*From The Lyre.*

"'*Martinuzzi*' continues to attract very creditable houses. It is a good stage-piece. In the preface to the second edition, Mr. Stephens in a very gentlemanly way, conciliates the favour of those members of the press who so unfairly dealt by the first performance of his tragedy. We consider the criticisms were unjust, and would have played at buffets with the curs, and have dealt them sound thrusts in exchange for their spiteful pinks."

*From The London and Paris Magazine.*

"We were surprised to find that there was so much opposition and party-spiritedness in the house; more so at the lack of judgment with which the device was carried on, as they had evidently stationed low

and *ignorant* persons in the boxes, who endeavoured to throw an ill-construction on some of the sublimest poetry which the age has given us. It rejoiced us, however, to find, that this malignant spirit was defeated in its object; for when the curtain fell, Mr. Phelps, and Mrs. Warner were loudly called for, and on their appearance, were greeted with the most enthusiastic bursts of applause from every quarter of the house. When they retired, the Author was also called for, who appeared from a private box, and was hailed in the same honest and liberal manner. The applause lasted at least ten minutes. '*Martinuzzi*;' is a splendid tragedy, and we wish it may have a good run."

From *Fraser's Magazine*.

"Thus did a profoundly solemn scene transpire in front with an *accidental* yet irresistible broad farce in the back-ground. But the tragic actors actually overcame the farce at the back to the end of the scene, and with most justly merited applause. The inherent energies of the tragedy fairly outlived all the previous storms. Moreover, we should say, that, after the first night, certain alterations, always made in all theatres, were put in force, and the tragedy went well every night, with the exception of one scene. Turase never could be got to kill Rupert, but always made a ludicrous retreat; and the legs of Rupert were always too long for the couch on which he breathed his last."

If the article from which the above is extracted, headed "Damned Tragedies," "to elicit no small merriment among our readers," was really contributed, as there would seem internal evidence to conclude, by Mr. Horne, it is certainly, remembering all things, coupled with his "*preposterous*" notice in "*The Spirit of the Age*," the most—what shall I say?—unaccountable *abstraction* which I could have conceived possible.—G. S.

From *The Monthly Magazine*.

"In spite of an organized opposition, '*Martinuzzi*' was declared by a crowded audience to be not only an acting, but a successful drama. Subsequent and increasing audiences for seven and twenty successive nights, proclaimed the same verdict. Could Mr. Stephens have run it for another month, *the tragedy, beyond a doubt, would have returned an enormous profit.*

"But the Lyceum theatre was only at liberty for a month, and a month was not sufficient time to subdue interested opposition, and create a public taste, much less to make the venture profitable. With that chivalry which belongs to his character, Mr. Stephens threw himself into the breach at the risk of falling as a sacrifice in a cause much misunderstood by its friends, insufferably maligned by its enemies, and unsupported, as yet, by popular sympathy. A portion of the newspaper press has been marked by especial villainy on the occasion. Bribes have been received for censuring, and unblushingly demanded for praise.\*

"*'Martinuzzi'* is a really good play of the highest and purest kind of drama. It is as purely dramatic as a tragedy of Æschylus. Its five great scenes (and **THESE ARE AMONG THE GREATEST IN THE WORLD**) are supported with miraculous power. It is a true poetic idea, and places Mr. Stephens at all but the summit of dramatic invention. That a soul like Martinuzzi's, suffering internal travail, should so conquer its pain as to triumph over external forces also, and stand the chief among men, is a sublime spectacle worthy of being classed with the Satan of Milton, the Prometheus of Æschylus, and the Job of the Bible.

"To the Author of *'Martinuzzi'*, then, be great honour rendered. The initiator of a new era of dramatic literature, he has come forward with unexampled heroism to incur the peril of martyrdom. He has put his reputation at risk for the sake of a noble cause. He has been

\* I have reason to believe that before the performance hints for bribery *were* dropped, and the fact of the applicants taking nothing by their motion, perhaps accounts for much that would be otherwise inexplicable. I was not, however, *insulted* by any personal demand.

May I take this occasion to repeat, even at the risk of appearing absurdly egotistic, in simple justice to those generous unknown reviewers who have honoured me by their handsome appreciation of "*Martinuzzi*," and other publications, that although the favourable criticisms my humble productions have elicited, are perhaps unprecedented in number, and many of them, in strength of laudatory expression, they are *not* the results of any mean bargain and sale,—

"For such proceedings I am charged withal."

I never in my life condescended, directly or "by any indirection," nor hath friend or agent, on my behalf, to solicit venal commendation, to pay tribute in any shape, or give so much as a sou, or a sou's worth to any mercenary critic . . . *if such there be*.

"Give me an honest fame or none at all."

G. S.



met with reproach, misapprehension, and ingratitude ; but a triumph shall still surely come to him living or dead.

"On the first evening of the performance, one of the most wicked stratagems was resorted to by interested opponents. They contrived literally to pack the house in many parts in knots and groups, under recognisable leaders, who commenced the warfare by sneering at the applause bestowed by the genuine part of the audience, by walking in and out of the several boxes, making discouraging remarks, and then leaving them ; by laughing at the sublimest images and most striking situations, and by other glaring and most obstreperous acts ; all of which indicated beyond a doubt the existence of a well-organized conspiracy. But it availed nothing. The good sense of the British public was not to be put down ; and the result was, that never was a play more enthusiastically applauded on the first night of its performance, in parts and at its close, than was '*Martinuzzi*.' On after-nights there were good houses. The success of the piece was complete."

*From The Globe.*

"The period of the first experimental struggle of dramatic authors against the theatrical monopoly of the legitimate drama, closed on Saturday night last, and in a manner which we should think must have satisfied the utmost expectations of the parties concerned. It is seldom that we have of late years seen a theatre so crowded, and with 'no standing room in the pit,' nor an audience so unanimous in its enthusiasm. The tragedy of '*Martinuzzi*' was performed for the *seven and twentieth* time.

At the fall of the curtain, Mrs. Warner, Mr. Phelps, and Mr. Elton were called for, and greeted with great applause. After this a call arose for the Author, who presented himself in front of a private box, and bowed to the audience ; but this being done too briefly to admit of the majority having an opportunity of seeing him, and giving him the greeting they desired, the applause continued for a full quarter of an hour, the audience refusing to allow the first after-piece to proceed, or even the band to play, until the Author had again presented himself, and received an applause which shook the whole edifice.





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